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Across Cultures: A Cross-Cultural Learning Experience

By
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In

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This thesis is dedicated to

Kenny Donnelly
Who taught me to dream

And

Rick Butler
Who helped me make my dreams come true

Abstract

This narrative-ethnography study explores the experiences and reality of one racially marginalized professor who works with both students and clients from diverse cultural backgrounds. The research focuses on the issues of racism and White privilege and how they impact the racially marginalized experience. This research was completed to enable counsellors to be more effective in cross cultural situations: Situations in which White counsellors work with racially marginalized clients and, perhaps, where racially marginalized counsellors work with either mainstream or racially marginalized clients. The issues of racism and White privilege were prevalent throughout this research and reinforced the importance of these issues to the counselling profession. The results indicate a need for institutions that train counsellors to make cross cultural, as well as intercultural education, a mandatory requirement of counselling education.

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Chapter 1: Introduction and Focus of Study

Personal Background and Bias of the Researcher

This is a research project that I never intended to undertake. In fact, I was approved to do research on my cross-cultural work within Inuit communities in the Canadian Arctic. However, I began to realize that I could not begin my story there. It would leave too many questions unanswered. Important questions such as: Why was I able to understand how very ignorant I was about the Inuit culture when I first arrived in the North when many other non-Inuit thought they were the "experts"? Why was I comfortable being the "student" as well as the "teacher" during my cross cultural work? What had opened my mind up to the fact that truly listening means opening your mind up to other possibilities of what is "normal" or "right" as well as other realities? These questions came to me slowly and powerfully as I reviewed both my personal and professional experiences. Initially, I wanted to ignore these questions and get on with my approved research. But, the more I thought of my cross cultural experiences, the more I knew that I had to find the answer to these types of questions before any other story made sense. As I pondered, it slowly dawned on me that it was my time spent with an African Canadian woman, who was both a teacher and a friend, that had created a significant difference in the way I perceived life stories and realities. When I state that "it slowly dawned on me" I now realize that these experiences with this person had been woven so deeply into the fabric of my own life story that it was difficult to see them as separate occurrences. They had become "who" I was; not just events that had happened to me. This woman had provided a new lens for me to view human experiences through and forced me to understand that

"stories have the power to direct and change our lives (Noddings, 1991, p. 157). I pondered how she had taught me so much that had affected me so deeply when, initially at least, I had been a reluctant student. I wondered if her teaching methods had an implication for all cross-cultural interactions whether it be between a student and teacher or a counsellor and client. I decided to attempt to answer that question in my research.

Thus, my own story is deeply affected in many positive ways by my interaction with my research participant. I am aware that because of this history, I bring a bias to this research. To combat this bias, I use the literature review to provide a context in which to place our stories so that the events and statements portrayed in the research can be better judged and examined. Massey (1996) points out that a literature review can act as a mentor that "can gently and kindly point out inconsistencies (within oneself and in relation to others), and act as an extra conscience or source of awareness of what one is or is not doing (p.3). I also use the research participant's own voice to describe many of her experiences and thoughts. Thus, my bias in the interpretations of her stories becomes more transparent.

Research Question

Wilson (1994) states that an increasing amount of literature is appearing on the process of multicultural counselling. In most cases, this literature deals with training the mainstream, usually White counsellors or teachers, to work with racially marginalized clients (Sue, Pederson, Draguns, Lonner & Trimble, Sue 1981as cited in Wilson, 1994). According to Wilson, the literature seldom focuses on the racially marginalized counsellor or teacher working with students from cultures other than her own. As the Canadian demographics change (Statistics Canada, 2002), it is becoming increasingly

important to study and learn how counsellors and teachers can best work with their clients, whether they are visible minorities or Euro-Canadians (Wilson, 1994). Wilson suggests that the experience that racially marginalized counsellors bring to the learning situation, combined with their own sense of caring, empathy, and genuineness, are probably the most vital tools that they can possess. She adds that, combined with sensitivity, these practical tools will work across all cultures and foster positive relationships. This hypothesis leads me to my research question: How does one racially marginalized professor relate her experiences and personal attributes to her ability to foster positive teaching and counselling relationships?

Purpose and Significance of the Question

The purpose of my research is to explore the experiences and reality of one racially marginalized professor who works with both students and clients from diverse cultural backgrounds. I did this with some hope that I could transfer what I learned to counselling situations: Situations in which White counsellors work with racially marginalized clients and, perhaps, situations where racially marginalized counsellors work with either mainstream or racially marginalized clients.

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

Introduction

My research focuses on the following question: How does one racially marginalized professor relate her experiences and personal attributes to her ability to foster positive teaching and counselling relationships? With this research question in mind, my literature review begins with an exploration of the need for both multicultural and cross-cultural counselling. This beginning creates a natural progression to frame the issue of racism and White privilege. Research on the need for allies in the fight against racism concludes the literature review.

Cross Cultural and Multicultural Counselling

All counsellors need to understand that race, culture and ethnicity are part of all of us and not limited to our racially marginalized clients. As they are increasingly called upon to serve clientele from culturally diverse backgrounds, Canadian counsellors are becoming more aware of the reality of our pluralistic society (Christensen, 1984). Thus, the demand for cultural consideration in interpersonal practice will create pressure on counsellors to train students for culturally competent practice with ethnic populations (Chau, 1992). In order to train students for this, we must understand what we are training to do and why it is important.

Cross cultural counselling has been defined as any counselling encounter in which two or more of the participants are culturally different (Atkinson, Morten & Sue, 1993, p.9). Studies dealing with cross-cultural counselling indicate that ethnic and racially

marginalized clients under use mental health services (Atkinson, Morten, & Sue, 1993; Leong, 1992; D.W. Sue, 1992). This tendency is often caused by cultural barriers such as language differences, class bound values and culture bound values that hinder the formation of a good counselling relationship (Corey, 1995). The literature also indicates that many counselling approaches fail to meet the needs of various ethnic and racially marginalized clients because of their stereotyped narrow perceptions of those needs (Atkinson et al., 1993). These counselling approaches encourage counsellors to use traditional White, middle class values to interpret the clients experiences (Corey, 1995) and, thus, encourage the creation of a "culturally encapsulated counsellor". Wrenn (1985) defines the "culturally encapsulate counsellor "as one who substituted stereotypes for the real world and disregards cultural variations among clients. He states that "culturally encapsulated practitioners" are not able to view the world through the eyes of their clients.

Sue, Arredondo, & McDavis, (1992) state that "it is apparent that the major reason for therapeutic ineffectiveness lies in the training of mental health professionals. Even in graduate programs where a course or courses on cross-cultural counselling exist, it is often still treated as ancillary and not an integral part of counselling" (p.478). They further state that this results in counsellors who do not receive enough practical experience in counselling with racial and ethnic minorities. Hayes (2001) states that students and counsellors have difficulty engaging with these issues because their racial identities are formed as a political commitment to a version of racial identity that has been established and solidified over time. This political commitment is shaped by two political realities that affect counselling professionals (Sue et.al, 1992). First, the

worldview of both the counsellor and client is ultimately linked to the historical and current experiences of racism and oppression. Second, counselling professionals need to recognize that counselling is directly linked to the political forces and events which affect not only our personal but professional lives as well. Hayes (2001) warns "educators who are interested in addressing these issues with colleagues or students… must understand the difficult, even dangerous, nature of this work"(p. 27).

Another explanation for therapeutic ineffectiveness lies in the failure of counsellors to assess, monitor and address cultural issues (Corey, 1995). However, in order to successfully address cultural issues, culturally skilled counsellors must understand their own values, biases, ethnocentric attitudes, and assumptions about human behavior (Corey, 1996, Sue et al, 1992). McIntosh (1992) states that "many, perhaps most, of our White student in the United States, think that racism doesn't affect them because they are not people of color; they do not see "Whiteness" as a racial identity (p.12). Wilson (1994) states that "I often hear Euro-American students complain that they don't have a culture. This indicates to me that these students don't know that they are cultural agents that they transmit a culture that they aren't aware of in every movement, in every action that they take, in every word that they speak" (p. 223). She maintains that teachers and counsellors must understand their own backgrounds, their cultural ties, their traditions and the significance of their experiences to see their culturally diverse students through caring and unbiased eyes"(p. 244). She states that "it is their understanding and interpretation of their own experiences, their own cultures, and their own biases that assist them in seeing others more clearly (p. 223)". She warns that without such awareness, the counsellor

who works with a culturally different client may be engaging in cultural oppression using unethical and harmful practices.

To better understand cultural oppression, a clear operational definition of racism must be established.

Defining Racism and Prejudice

Although racism and prejudice are often used interchangeably (Brown, 1995; Young-Bruehl 1996), these terms are not used interchangeably in this paper. It is, therefore, important to establish a clear, operational definition for both racism and prejudice.

The classic definition of prejudice is the one put forth by the famous Harvard psychologist, Gordon Allport who published The Nature of Prejudice. Allport (1954) defines prejudice as "a feeling, favorable or unfavorable, toward a person or thing, prior to, or not based on actual experience" (p. 6). He adds "it may be directed toward a group as a whole or toward an individual because he is a member of that group" (p. 9).

The American Psychological Association (2000) states that "racism is based on prejudice toward racial groups" (p. 1). They add that racism is powerful and destructive because it allows the negative prejudice to become the basis for discrimination against racial groups. This definition implies that racism occurs when one group has the power to act on their prejudice in discriminating against another racial group. The ICERD (International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination) defines racism as "any distinction, exclusion, restriction, or preferences based on race, color, descent, or national or ethnic origin which has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment, or exercises, on equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of

public life". C.R. Ridley, (quoted in Pontoerotto and Pedersen, 1993, p. 12) states that racism is "any behavior or pattern that systematically tends to deny access to opportunities or privilege to one social group while perpetuating privilege to members of another group. Carmichael & Hamilton (1967) state that racism is "the predication of decisions and policies on considerations of race for the purpose of subordination of a racial group and maintaining control over it" (pp. 3-4). Dalton (1995) states that "racism consists of culturally acceptable ideas, beliefs and attitudes that serve to sustain the racial pecking order" (p. 93). Comer (1980) and Pinderhughes (1973) state that racism is the use of repressive actions to systematically maintain the dominance of one group over another and the belief that the dominant group is superior to the oppressed group.

Thus, as the above definitions illustrate, both prejudice and racism involve attitudes and beliefs. However, racism also involves behavior, decisions and actions (Ponterotto and Pedersen, 1993, pp. 10-15: Smith, 1995, pp. 29-35).

Miller (2000) agrees with this distinction between racism and prejudice. He states that racism is prejudice combined with personal and institutional power. He defines prejudice as a judgment or an opinion formed before hand without due examination. Further, he notes that prejudices are of different types: Race prejudice, institutional racism, etc. He defines the word power as " the ability to do anything - physical, mental, legal". On the basis of this definition, Miller asserts that there are several types of power, and that not all individuals possess all powers. Further, he notes that some types of power, such as political power, can be acquired; while some, such as White privilege are innate. Miller concludes that racism is an acquired power - the power to impose one's racial prejudices with the conscious or subconscious objective of subjugating and exploiting another race.

This definition has numerous implications. The hurt that African-Canadians feel as a result of racism is not merely due to race prejudice, but rather, the power that the offender has to impose it, and the powerlessness that the victim appears to have to eradicate it. Further, in examining acts that one may consider racist, it is not sufficient to challenge the attitude of the offender. The system of power that supports and perpetuates these acts much also be challenged. Miller also maintains that since racism is an acquired power, it can potentially be eradicated. However, he adds that racism does not exist in a vacuum, but rather is enacted and reinforced through social, cultural, and institutional practices that endorse the hierarchical power of one racial group over another.

Race, Culture and Power

Although we have been socialized to believe that people can be differentiated on the basis of race, that there are certain biologically determined differences between peoples; humanity cannot be divided into groups distinguished by biological properties (Satzewich, 1998). In her examination of the roots of race, racism and racial identity, Smedley (1993) maintains that race is a socially produced historical construct that was originally developed as a mechanism for justifying European colonial expansion. Willinsky (1998) states that the concept of race and the notion that people can be unambiguously divided into predetermined racial categories was developed to clearly set boundaries and establish a hierarchy by which those in positions of dominance could determine who should rule and who should be conquered. As McLaren (1998) concludes, "power relations may not always have a conscious design, but they have unintended consequences which define deep structural aspects of oppression" (p. 53).

Inherent in issues of race, culture and class are issues of power. (Delpit, 1995) "Those with power are frequently least aware of — or least willing to acknowledge — its existence," while members of subordinate groups are acutely conscious of the disparities (p. 26). Scheurich (1993) observes that the longer one group is dominant, the more effectively "the styles of thinking, acting, speaking, and behaving of the dominant group. . . become the socially correct or privileged ways of thinking, acting, speaking, and behaving" (p. 7).

> The ways of the dominant group become universalized as measures of merit, hiring criteria, grading standards, predictors of success, correct grammar, appropriate behavior, and so forth, all of which are said to be distributed as differences in individual effort, ability, or intelligence. Membership in a social group and group-related, inequitable distribution of resources and power thus disappear under the guise of individualism. (p. 7).

Scheurich (1993) maintains that the pervasiveness of the mainstream Western belief in individualism acts as an extremely powerful filter. He states that "among Whites, the idea that each person is largely the source or origin of herself or himself, that is, individualism, is considered a natural facet of life. Within the frame of this belief, individualism is seen as a naturally occurring, trans-historical, transcultural condition to which all humans naturally aspire" (p. 6). The focus on the individual functions not only as a goal but also as an explanation for differences in status and achievement. Individualism helps to mask social inequities by attributing "success" and "failure" to the behavior and characteristics of each person rather than to patterns of access and opportunity (Scheurich & Young, 1997). Stanton-Salazar (1997) characterizes this belief

as very simplistic and claims that it is geared to preserve the status quo. Moreover, some authors note the convenience of the mainstream belief in individual merit. Delpit (1995) observes, "To act as if power does not exist is to ensure that the power status quo remains the same" (p. 39). Tatum (1997) claims that those who reap the tangible benefits of privilege have little apparent reason to question what has always been assumed to be true.

Scheurich and Young (1997), discuss the ways in which the individualist perspective within Western culture works to obscure racism and to "keep the thinking about equality or equity incomplete". They state that the fact that "racism in the U.S. is overwhelmingly seen as an individual phenomenon" (p. 5), helps to explain why many White people so often believe that racism is a limited problem, and react with confusion and hurt when others describe them as part of the problem. Most people do not consider themselves racist and may speak and act against racism. However, Scheurich and Young (1997) point out that:

> While. . . individualized, conscious, moral or ethical commitment to antiracism is a significant and meaningful individual and historical accomplishment, the fact that it restricts our understanding of racism to an individualized ethical arena is a barrier to a broader, more comprehensive understanding of racism — for society and for researchers. (p. 5)

Distinguishing Cultural from Socio-Economic Factors

Smart & Smart (1992) discuss "the danger of confusing culture with socioeconomic level," observing that "much of what is thought to be culturally derived is actually a result of economic conditions" (p. 31). They assert that poverty may lie at the root of many behaviors that could be misdiagnosed as being based on a cultural or racial norm.

As an example, Harry (1992) points out that "the stereotype of the absent Black father is tied to economics and class rather than being characteristic of African Americans as a whole" (p. 49).

Some writers have suggested that the condition of poverty itself has given rise to a distinctive cultural group. As Luft (1995) describes it, poverty "frequently is viewed as a distinctive subculture of American life, and one that carries with it an intergenerational cycle" (p. 13). In fact, White racist groups often target disenfranchised poor and working-class teenage males and present a scenario that their Whiteness, their heritage and their way of life are being threatened. These groups politicize White racial identity to encourage new members and mobilize them for political action (Aho, 1990).

McLemore (1994) reports that the idea that poverty has given rise to a distinctive culture is not supported by research. He states that viewing poverty as a distinctive culture may be "an elaborate way to shift the responsibility for social change away from the majority and onto the shoulders of the racially marginalized, a process characterized as "blaming the victim" (p. 342).

In his book, Pedogogy of the Oppressed, Freire (1970) discusses the relationship of the oppressor and the oppressed. He reminds us that the status, power and domination of the oppressor are not possible without the existence of the oppressed. Freire takes our understanding of this relationship one step further in his conception of both the oppressor and the oppressed as manifestations of dehumanizations. The oppressor is dehumanized by the act of oppression while the oppressed are dehumanized by the existential reality of oppression and the internalization of the image of the oppressor. Consequently, the oppressed sustain an existential dual identity being "...at one and the same time

themselves and the oppressor whose consciousness they have internalized" (p. 30). Thus, the goal for pedagogy of the oppressed is to restore lost humanity and thereby liberate both the oppressed and the oppressor.

McClafferty (2001) states that Freire has placed too much emphasis on the class struggle thereby limiting his portrayal of oppression within the confines of class as defined by "oppressed" or "oppressor". Thus, she states that his book is limited due to the omission of issues surrounding gender, race, ethnicity, language and multiple-class social structures. However, Hendriks (2001) acknowledges that Freire's recognition of these interconnected relationships is somewhat superficial and vague. However, Hendriks adds that Freire was correct in defending class as the apex to the understanding of all other forms of oppression and encouraging anti-racism and anti-sexist movements to integrate a conception of class differentiation within their analysis of oppression and dominance.

Racial Identity as a Political Alliance

Hayes (2001) discusses White racial identity as a political alliance. He states that a political alliance is an appropriate concept for examining and understanding White racial identity because it illustrates how the White racial identity has become embedded in the very fabric of our Western societal norms and expectations. Hayes states that the implications of his theory are twofold:

> First Whites must acknowledge and take responsibility for the historically derived systems of privilege that place them into alliances with each other. Second Whites must also understand that reformulating a racial identity entails the development of social relationships that, because they are racial in nature, are inherently political. This means that constructing a White racial identity is a form of political

> action that requires a conscious effort to develop an anti-racist identity that embraces the possibility and need for social justice (p. 15).

Hayes (2001) asserts that Whites live in a social formation that confers levels of privilege upon them because they are defined and linked within that social formation as White. He (2001) argues that naming Whiteness as a culture upsets the normative ideology: the invisibility and the "taken-for-grantedness that is Whiteness" (p.17). In fact, Hayes feels that his theory of White racial identity is an act of naming that is intended to expose the entrenched systems of privilege that have remained hidden at the core of White racial identity. Hayes states that "this act of naming raises indignation and resentment by many in the White population who are not used to being specifically designated by their race (p.18). He states that the emotional reactions to simply being identified makes sense "only if individuals have a sense that there is something at stake and to defend in their racial identity" (p18).

Hayes (2001) states that White racial identity is defined through the tension between external and internal forces. It is a struggle between the social world that fixes identity and the personal drive to construct a position that serves individual needs and interests. He asserts that White racial identity is a matter of individuals being placed into alliances by particular individuals, groups, ideas and discourses of race. They then construct their own alliances that cohere or conflict with these. Hayes suggests the following:

> Simply understanding that a racial identity is a form of political alliance will not produce the kind of anti-racist change that I advocate. Politicizing White racial identity removes claims to any form of ontological necessity -there is no essential quality to a White racial identity; rather, it is the culmination of personal as well

> as historical and institutional struggles. This means that reconstructing a White anti-racist identity requires that a conscious effort must be made to realign conceptions of self and move in an ethical direction. If not, we will be placed into alliances and moved, quite apart from a conscious decision, in a direction. And…these may not be alliances in which we want to participate (p. 24).

Hayes (2001) adds that it would not be acceptable to just denounce racism by denying any and all relationship to racist individuals and the ideas and discourses that they represent.

> If the overt politics of White racial identity are overlooked or minimized, then denial becomes an accepted, even preferred strategy. This is a problematic stance because Whites are inherently linked through social and institutional arrangements and a White identity cannot be simply denied (Bailey, 1999). All possible courses of action must be understood within the parameters bequeathed to us by a social structure that is defined in terms of White privilege. Realigning a racial identity so that it incorporates the possibility for anti-racist political action necessities a space in which to maneuver so that a new set of social relationships can be established (p. 22).

White Privilege

Just as there are racial identities of color in Canada, there is also a White racial identity. To Canadians of European descent Whiteness is akin to normalness (McIntosh, 1992); yet, as Frankenberg (1996) points out, it is unacknowledged and unknown to most White people. Euro-Canadians do not define themselves as White – they merely construct themselves as Not being people of color. This invisibility of Whiteness is "historically,

socially, politically and culturally produced and…linked to…relations of domination" (Weis et al., 1997, p.22). This domination manifests itself in the form of White privilege. Much of the Euro-Canadian (White) identity production swirls around the creation and maintenance of the dark "other" against which their own Whiteness and goodness are necessarily understood. The social construction of this goodness, then, provides moral justification for privileged standpoints. (Weis, Proweller, & Centrie, 1997, p.212)

McIntosh (1992) maintains that Whites are not taught to recognize how their status as White people confers on them many privileges. She adds that "I have come to see White privilege as an invisible package of unearned assets that I can count on cashing in each day, but about which I was "meant" to remain oblivious" (p. 1). She states that " for me White privilege has turned out to be an elusive and fugitive subject. The pressure to avoid it is great, for in facing it I must give up the myth of meritocracy. If these things are true, this is not such a free country; ones' life is not what one makes it; many doors open for certain people through no virtues of their own" (p.4). She adds that " I did not see myself as a racist because I was taught to recognize racism only in individual acts of meanness by members of my group, never in invisible systems conferring unsought racial dominance on my group from birth" (p.6). McIntosh (1992) states that oppression that leads to dominance takes two forms: an active form, which can be seen; and an embedded form which members of the dominant group are taught not to see. She states that to redesign the social system therefore requires acknowledgement of its colossal unseen dimensions.

McIntosh (1992) also states that most White, middle-class citizens see society from a monocultural perspective, a perspective that assumes, often unconsciously, that persons

of all races are in the same cultural system together. She states that this single-system form of seeing the world is blind to its own cultural specificity. People who see persons of other races monoculturally cannot imagine the reality that those "others" think of themselves not in relation to the majority race but in terms of their own culturally specific identities.

Allies in the Fight Against Racism

Beverly Tatum (1994) states that White people need allies if they are going to be a force in the construction of an anti-racist society. She maintains that White educators need to become allies with their students and colleagues in an effort to restore hope for an anti-racist society. She suggests that Whites who have begun questioning their role in White racism may feel as if they have been cut off from the basis of their identity and, `become immobilized by their own despair' (p. 47). Tatum states that rather than simply trying to break ties with relationships that encourage White racism, we must also have another place to go; another set of relationships from which we can form a new set of alliances. McIntosh (1992) states that "disapproving of the system won't be enough to change it. I was taught to think that racism could end if White individuals changed their attitude. But a "White" skin in the United States opens many doors for Whites whether or not we approve of the way dominance has been conferred on us. Individual acts can palliate but cannot end these problems"(p. 6).

Although Connie Titone (1999) refers specifically to teachers, her discussion on the fight against racism is equally applicable to counsellors. Titone suggests that White teachers must be educated as allies of racially marginalized groups in the fight against racism. But this is not just an alliance with racially marginalized groups; it is also an

alliance with other White people that have taken up the fight against racism. Titone argues that `allied relationships' are created as White teachers come to understand that those they are allied with suffer individual and system wide discrimination. Rather than asking that White teachers change their individual identity or self-perception, Titone asks that they seek to form relationships that are for the expressed purpose of combating racism. She maintains that this is not just a matter of changing a self-perception; it is a re-formation of the self that is achieved through the transformation of professional, social, and political relationships. However, McLaren (1998) cautions that there is an unwillingness to let go of a racial identity that has required much time and effort in the making. He adds that we must expect that it will take at least as much effort to move our identity in a different direction.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Choosing the Design

When I first conceived the idea for this research, I was sure I wanted to use a qualitative research methodology to obtain and analyze my data. Qualitative researchers have a special interest in the perspective of the research participants. Assumptions, motives, reasons, goals, and values are important aspects to all qualitative research and an essential ingredient in my research. In the early process of assessing the merits of various qualitative strategies, I narrowed it down to two options, ethnographic approach and narrative inquiry. Each of these qualitative approaches take place in a natural setting and strive for a more holistic interpretation of the event, person or situation under study. In order to make my decision I had to link the purpose of my study with the research method or methods that would best fulfill that purpose. The purpose of my research was to explore the experiences and reality of one racially marginalized professor who works with both students and clients from diverse racial backgrounds. In order to capture that experience in a meaningful manner I felt that it was essential that I use narrative inquiry in order to hear Wanda's stories through her own voice. I also felt that I needed to use ethnography to honor Wanda's culture and place her stories into context. Thus, I choose to combine narrative inquiry and ethnography into narrative-ethnography. I felt this was the best way to allow voice and culture to combine and provide a rich source of data with which to fulfill the purpose of this research. To safeguard the credibility of this study I

have used a triangulated process, which consists of the narrative story of my research participant combined with my own story and supported by literature.

Narrative Inquiry

Narrative research refers to any study that uses narrative material. The data can be collected as a life story provided in an interview or in a different manner such as in field notes or personal letters. It may be used for comparison among groups, to learn about a social phenomenon or historical period, or to explore a personality (Lieblich, 1998).

Clandinin & Connelly (2000) emphasize that narrative inquiry is not only a means of representing the studied group; it is also one way of characterizing the phenomena of human experience itself.

> Narrative inquiry is a way of understanding experience. It is collaboration between researcher and participants, over time, in a place or series of places and in social interactions and milieus. An inquirer enters this matrix in the midst and progresses in this same spirit, concluding the inquiry still in the midst of living and telling, reliving and retelling, the stories of the experience that make up people's lives, both individual and social. Simply stated…narrative inquiry is stories lived and told (p. 20).

Connelly and Clandinin (1990) note that, "humans are storytelling organisms who, individually and collectively, lead storied lives" (p.2). They assert that researchers use narrative inquiry because "narrative inquiry is a way, the best way we believe, to think about experience" (p.80). And it is the experience of one person's life story reflected in the thoughts and deeds of another, is what I wish to express in this research. To

accomplish this, I need to give "voice" to these experiences. Voice in narrative research is "the sharing of the experience of particular groups so that others may know life as they know it" (Cortazzi, 2001, p.386). Cortazzi (2001) adds that "the publicizing aspect of voice provides a higher public profile to human qualities, often to reveal crucial, but probably unappreciated, personal and professional qualities involved in many occupations and professions" (p. 386).

Narrative inquiry provides an opportunity to hear the "stories" or "narratives" group members live by in order to understand their experience better. Most narratives do not simply report events but rather give a teller's perspective on their meaning, relevance and importance. Cortazzi (2001) asserts that telling stories of personal experiences is a way of looking at the past and evaluating it. The social transmission of experience through narrative therefore has an institutional role in the continuity and reproduction of organizations, communities and cultures. He states that narrative also has an individual or collective role in the formation and maintenance of identity.

Unlike most research methods, narrative inquiry does not require the researcher to define a precise set of issues in the initial phases; these issues often emerge from the study over time (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). While some narrative inquiry researchers may begin with a set of questions, it is common for theories about group behavior and interactions to emerge, as a result of the observer's exploratory work (emergent design). Those theories may identify relevant questions for further research. Whatever approach is taken in determining the research question, the observer does need to be clear about the purpose, scope, and focus of the study and identify the subjects and the context in which they will be studied.

Narrative inquiry is positioned within a metaphorical three-dimensional space which consists of the "personal and social (interaction); past, present and future (continuity); combined with the notion of place (situation) (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p.50). This provides narrative inquirers with a set of parameters that point "them backward and forward, inward and outward" and locates "them in place" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 54). Thus, every narrative inquiry is a way of organizing episodes, actions and accounts of actions within a framework of time and place (Cortazzi, 2001; Plummer, 2001). This three-dimensional space is difficult for the researcher because each dimension must be considered at all times during the research. However, temporal considerations are perhaps the most difficult to factor into research. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) stated that "one's experience becomes tinged with time, making it sometimes difficult to sort out where exactly one is located in time" (p. 89).

In narrative inquiry field text can be composed in many different formats such as field notes, reflective journals or research interviews. Clandinin & Connelly state that "field notes, combined with journals written of our field experience provide a reflective balance (p.104). They further state that interviews are an important method in creating field text. They add that oral history interviews are the most common in narrative inquiry. Oral histories can be structured using structured interview questions or an unstructured interview in which the research participant tells "their own stories in their own way" (p.111). Structured interviews may permit more focused information gathering, but may overlook aspects of the group that an unstructured interview might reveal. In fact, from the narrative perspective, if the interview is controlled, narrative tend to be less natural or conversational and hence less authentic (Cortazzi, 2001).

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) state that "our inquiry task is to discover and construct meaning in those texts" (p. 130). They assert that when composing field text, researchers must position their field text into this three-dimensional inquiry. They maintain that "without this careful positioning of our field texts, and our explicit acknowledgment of how they are positioned, the research texts ultimately constructed from them are endlessly open to unanswerable questions and criticisms about knowledge claims being made and meanings generated" (p. 118).

Clandinin & Connelly (2000) state that the move from field text to research text is not done in a series of steps. Rather they conclude that in narrative inquiry "negotiation occurs from beginning to end. Plotlines are continually revised as consultation takes place over written materials, and as further field texts are composed to develop points of importance in the revised story" (p. 132). This consultation can result in the sharing of interim texts with the research participants in order to obtain further information and feedback. Clandinin and Connelly (2001) define interim texts as "texts situated in the spaces between field texts and final published research texts" (p. 132).

Research texts slowly emerge from field texts when questions concerning meaning and significance of the field texts are asked repeatedly (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). In order to do this, narrative inquirers need to "construct a chronicled or summarized account of what is contained within different sets of field texts" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 131). The narrative inquirer must code all field text with "notation of dates, contexts for the composition of the field texts, characters involved, perhaps topics dealt with and so forth." (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 131). Narrative coding is used to allow themes or patterns to emerge.

Beginning the slow process of analyzing the field text into research text does not imply that the close relationships with participants have ended but rather that the relationships shift from the intensity of living stories with participants to retelling stories through research texts (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). The analyzing and writing stages of research also mark the point where researchers weave their stories together with the stories of research participants. This represents the ultimate goal of narrative inquiry to produce a text that in the end provides a clearer understanding of the individual, group or culture's behavior, and by doing so helps us better understand our own individual or group behaviors. Cortazzi (2000) states that most narratives are told about things, which, at one level or another, matter to the teller and audience. Therefore, a careful analysis of the topics, content, style, context and telling of narratives told by individuals or groups under ethnographic study should, in principle, give researcher access to tellers' understanding of the meanings of key events in their lives, communities or cultural contexts.

Clandinin and Connelly (1990) stated "we found that merely listening, recording, and fostering participant story telling was both impossible…and unsatisfying. We learned that we, too, needed to tell our stories. Scribes we were not; storytellers and story livers we are. And in our story telling, the stories of our participants merged with our own to create new stories" (p.12). Because of this, narrative inquiry is neither prescriptive nor definite. While it does provide significant data about groups or cultures and prompts new research questions, narrative studies do not attempt to answer questions, nor are they predictive of future behaviors.

Ethnography

Although this research is by no means a pure ethnographic study, I did use tools from ethnographic methodology in order to provide a more holistic context for Wanda's story. Ethnography is often used to help obtain a holistic picture of a culture. Ethnographers study the culturally shared, common sense perceptions of everyday experiences (Van Manen, 1992). Ethnography is constructed as a narrative account of a quest, discovery and interpretation – the journey from outsider to insider – using story conventions to persuade readers effectively (Cortazzi, 2000). Thus, ethnographies may be seen as composed of the narratives people tell of their lives (Plummer 2001). Ellis (1999) states that ideally, the goal of ethnography is to see a particular situation from the native's perspective, from the inside. This is the *emic* perspective. To view a cultural situation entirely from an outsider's point of view is to take an *etic* perspective. Emic descriptions of behavior depend "on discovering native categories of action. Etic descriptions…are based on categories created by the investigator, and are usually employed to compare things cross-culturally" (Spradley as cited in Ellis, 1999, p. 13]

Ellis (1999) states that most ethnographers will find themselves between the complete insider views and the complete outsider views. He adds that while it is to be hoped that no ethnographer will work for long from the perspective of a complete outsider, it is also unusual for ethnography to be done by complete insiders. This has to do with the difficulty of maintaining the perspective needed to carry out research of this nature. This is a "view of participants observation [which] discourages complete participation because

subjective involvement is thought to be a threat to objectivity" (Jogrensen as cited in Ellis, 1999, p13)

Ellis (1999) states that the emic and etic perspectives are distinct ways of looking at reality, but they need not, indeed should not, be used in isolation from one another. The emic perspective provides "the insiders' or native's perspective of reality and is at the heart of ethnographic research" (Ellis, 1999). The etic perspective is the "external, social scientific perspective on reality" and must be used in conjunction with the data gathered using the native's view of reality to make sense of the situation. "Just as thorough fieldwork requires an insightful and sensitive cultural interpretation combined with various data collection techniques, good ethnography requires both emic and etic perspectives" (Fetterman as cited in Ellis, 1999, p. 13).

Spradly (as cited in Ellis, 1999) illustrates that the ethnographic study begins with an outsider's view of a problem or social situation which seems to call for investigation. As the study progressed, the insider's view becomes much more predominant, then, to a certain extent, gives way to the external view of reality as the investigator tries to fit the findings into the "big picture". (Ellis, 1999, p. 13)

In Fetterman's opinion (as cited in Ellis, 1999) ethnography is a cyclical process which begins with a panoramic view of a social phenomenon and moves to a microscopic focus on details. From there the focus returns to the larger picture because "only by both penetrating the depth and skimming the surface can the ethnographer portray the cultural landscape in detail rich enough for others to comprehend and appreciate" (Ellis, 1999, p. 18).

Ethnography was also used in this research to provide a better understanding of the educational system in which the research participant works, as well as the educational settings in which counsellors are trained. While ethnography has traditionally been thought of as the description of the culture of a whole community it has been and is equally applicable to the description of social discourse among any group of people among whom social relations are regulated by custom (Ellis, 1999). Erickson (as cited in Ellis, 1999) states that classrooms and schools, and indeed counselling clinics, are all well suited to ethnographic inquiry. Wilcox (1988) agrees that ethnography is an extremely useful tool, which allows researchers to explore in detail the highly complex series of phenomena, which operate in and around the classroom. "It is only through our ability to construct a detailed picture of the full range of dynamics at work that we have any hope of intervening effectively toward the resolution of persisting educational problems" (Wilcox, 1988, p. 478).

Ethnographers have often utilized their contextual knowledge of the culture as a whole to illuminate their investigation of what is being transmitted in schools and counselling situations. They have been particularly interested in exploring how the nature of the wider society constrains the educational and counselling process. Ethnographers have most frequently framed their view of schools around the concept of cultural transmission (Wilcox, 1988). In this view, the school acts primarily as an agent of the culture, transmitting a complex set of attitudes, values, behavior and expectations which will enable a new generation to maintain the culture as an ongoing phenomenon (Spindler, 1955, 1963a; Kimball 1974 as cited in Wilcox, 1988).

The conceptualization of schooling and cultural transmission runs in direct opposition to the conception of schools shared by many scholars, educational administrators, teachers, and members of the public, in which schools are regarded as instruments of reform and of change (Wilcox, 1988). "The dominant view of schooling within the culture is that of an institution existing to improve society, not to reproduce it more or less as is. Much of the ethnographic work serves to challenge this familiar way of thinking about schools" (Wilcox, 1988, p. 463-464),

Wilcox (1988) states that ethnographers have investigated schools and classrooms from the perspectives of both stability and change. They have focused on interactional dynamics in school and classrooms; on relationships between school staff and parents; on the role of educational administrators; and on ways in which the assumptions, values, and structures of the culture as a whole are expressed in the arena of schooling. They have illuminated the role of the school in perpetuating social stratification on the basis of class and ethnicity and have explored a number of dynamics, which limit equal opportunity.

Wilcox (1988) maintains that through this ethnographic research schools have been seen to reproduce or to transmit culture from one generation to the next in a variety of ways. Ethnographers have focused on what has been referred to as the "hidden curriculum" or that which is taught implicitly rather than explicitly. This focus has involved a view and an explanation of educational personnel as active cultural beings, suffused with the orientations of the culture, rather than as neutral dispensers of information about reading, writing and arithmetic. The transmission of that which is implicit in the culture can be thought of as including a set of skills, different from those

taught in the formal curriculum, of values of motivational strategies and goals, of self-images, of relationships to peers, and authorities and so on.

According to Wilcox (1988), ethnographic research has concluded that in addition to teaching common sets of values, orientations and motivational structures, schools in capitalist industrial societies have been teaching students their likely future position in the work hierarchy. In terms of extracurricular activities, the school social organizations have been observed to mirror the stratified social life of the community. Ethnographers have noted the impact of class and racial stratification inside the classroom as well as out. Lowered expectations and the teaching of skills and attitudes appropriate to the lower levels of work hierarchies have been observed in classrooms populated with students from racially marginalized and lower middle class and lower class backgrounds. However, high expectations and skills and attitudes appropriate to the upper levels of the hierarchy have been observed to be transmitted in classrooms populated by students from Caucasian and/or upper middle class backgrounds (Leacock, Rosenfeld, Spindler, Sennett and Cobb, as cited in Wilcox, 1988). Thus, it appears that schools are engaged in differential education and socialization based on student social class and ethnic backgrounds. This perception is in direct opposition to the common cultural perception that schools are agents of equal opportunity, teaching children from all backgrounds what they need to be successful, if only the children will learn what is taught.

The major benefit of ethnographic research is that it provides rich descriptions of human behavior in natural settings not in artificially constructed experimental settings. This allows the researcher to observe things that otherwise might not even be anticipated. (Plummer, 2000). Another key strength of ethnographic research is that "it lends itself

well to research topics that are not easily quantified …[and] it can reveal nuances and subtleties that other methodologies miss" (Fraenkel & Wallen, as cited in Ellis, 1999).

Using the Narrative-Ethnography Approach

Participant

My research focused on Dr. Wanda Thomas Bernard. She is an African Canadian woman. She is presently the Director of the Social Work Department in a prominent Eastern Canadian university. I was in my early twenties when I first met Wanda. I became her student in a cross cultural course that was a requirement for my Bachelor of Social Work. She became my teacher, my field supervisor and my friend. The experiences and knowledge I took from my time with Wanda dramatically shaped how I acted and thought in both my personal and professional life. Because of this, I felt that I needed to more fully understand Wanda's story in order to put my own into context.

I contacted Wanda by telephone to discuss my research. She and I had maintained casual contact so I anticipated that the conversation would be chatty and informal. However, I did not anticipate how nervous I would be in making my request. I knew from past conversations that she was very busy with professional commitments. I felt that she had already given me so much of her time, energy and knowledge when I was a student that I was reluctant to put her on the spot by asking for more. I also knew that this project was going to require a great deal of self -reflection on my part and, frankly, I wondered if I was up to it. I made the telephone call and was immediately put at ease. Our talk comfortably flowed back and forth in the easy rhythm of friendship. We chatted about people we knew and laughed about past events we had enjoyed. We updated each other on happenings in our lives and I congratulated her on a much-deserved promotion she

had received. After our telephone call, the anticipation of learning more about the two of us through this experience began to be more significant and gave me hope that I could complete the journey I knew that I had just begun.

The Telling of the Stories: Presenting and Analyzing the Narratives

In order to accomplish the research objective of obtaining a better understanding of both my own as well as Wanda's story, this thesis has two strong voices. Cortazzi (2000) states that research is used to allow the voices of teacher and, less often, the learners to be heard. During my research, Wanda's voice shared the "teacher's" story. My voice expressed "the learner's" story. Clandinin & Connelly (2000) point out that "in narrative inquiry, it is impossible (or if not impossible, then deliberately self-deceptive) as a researcher to stay silent or to present a kind of perfect, idealized, inquiring, moralizing self" (p.62). Thus, I shared how I used the information that I learned from experiencing Wanda in my life and how these experiences affected me in the past and in the present. It is this difficult temporal journey that I wish to take during my research. The "now" and the "then" of how Wanda's experiences effected her own life as well as mine. In this journey, I included the personal as well as the social considerations that made up our lives and how they continued to mold our existences over time. The concept of "place" was woven into the stories to provide coherence to our narratives and to provide the reader with the context needed to more fully understand the significance our stories. This three-dimensional space framed the stories I collected and united them together to show how one person's life continued to be reflected in another's actions and thoughts. As Connelly and Clandinin (2000) point out " in all instances, narrative inquiry involves

formulating a thoughtful and well-understood relationship between the researcher and research participants".

Wanda and I used e-mail and telephone conversations to set the time and place for our interviews. I traveled to Eastern Canada for our interviews on July 30, 2000. I met briefly with Wanda on July 31 to finalize the details. The interviews were held in her office and were approximately seven hours in duration. We then went to supper and spent five hours relaxing in each other's company. With Wanda's permission, I tape recorded the interviews so that I could participate in our discussions freely. During the interviews, I used the oral history interview method. This method allowed her to tell her story in her own way (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 111). The interviews explored the information she felt was important to teach her students and how she felt that her own actions and teaching methods contributed to this learning. I explored this issue from both a personal and cultural point of view. I also explored any significant experiences that shaped her teaching and personal philosophy. Interviews were transcribed from the audiotapes into written texts. As I transcribed the tapes I noted any recurring images or particular themes that arose. At the end of transcribing each set of interviews I grouped and regrouped these images and themes to develop broader themes and to find possible relationships between the shared stories. Once all the tapes had been transcribed, common ideas were grouped and then sorted and ordered from general to specific. The themes that were identified were divided into a number of categories and subcategories. Sections of each interview were coded into the various categories that had developed. New categories were created when a section did not fit into an existing category. These broad themes were used to structure the final narratives. I used the repetition of similar stories as a "culling device,"

(Gray, 1996, p. 48), a determinant of the level of importance of the stories. I looked for the broad themes that were encapsulated in these stories. It was these themes that provided the structure needed for the narratives. Throughout this process, I remembered that my goal was to share Wanda's story, in her words and from her perspective. However, I also needed to connect her stories to my own as well as the research issue. Thus the stories I chose to share from Wanda's narrative were influenced by the context of my research. I then discussed these themes that had emerged with Wanda. I provided Wanda with the opportunity to correct, change or delete any or all of the information. After establishing that each story is what Wanda wanted told, I matched these stories with my own stories. I then framed our stories within the three-dimensional space: Temporal dimensions, personal-social dimensions, and within place. Throughout this process, I also shared the interim texts with Wanda. As well, Wanda had the opportunity to read and discuss my completed research report before it was submitted to my thesis committee.

During the entire research process, I kept a reflective journal as well as extensive field notes. Both the reflective journal and field notes were positioned within the three-dimensional narrative inquiry spaces. The primary purpose of my reflective journal and field notes was to allow me to be more aware of my own feelings, insights and experiences.

Ethics

Ethical issues should always be considered when undertaking data collection and data analysis. Because my research required observation and interaction with a person, it is understandable that certain ethical issues might arise. Miles and Huberman (1994) list

several issues that researchers should consider when analyzing data: Informed consent; harm and risk for participants; honesty and trustworthiness of research; as well as privacy and confidentiality. They caution researchers to be aware of these and other issues before, during, and after the research had been conducted.

I addressed all ethical issues pertinent to my research in the ethic review that I submitted to the faculties of Education and Extension Research Ethics Board at the University of Alberta. My research participant, Dr. Wanda Thomas Bernard, had requested that her real name and professional title be used in the research. I was given permission by the Ethics Board to accommodate her request. I then e-mailed the consent form to her. I ensured that she fully understood and agreed with the terms and agreement outlined on the consent form prior to signing it. My data collection did not commence until the consent form was signed and returned to me.

It should be noted that although I do use Dr. Thomas Bernard's name with permission, all other names used in our stories have been changed in order to protect the identity of those involved.

Chapter 4: Wanda's Story

The fourth chapter brings together the "now" and the "then" of how Wanda's experiences affected her life as well as the lives of her students. Although this section is separated into themes for the sake of this thesis, I realize that these themes are intertwined in almost everything she said. The necessity of using themes is a manifestation of a Western, academic framework.

I am coming to the understanding that there are frameworks that differ from the Western Academic framework. Many of these proceed holistically instead of thematically. However, I am bound by my own education, which is Western, and by my own culture, which is White. Until I understand other frameworks better, the Western framework will be the one that I use.

In the section entitled, A Story of A Life Lived, I use Wanda's own voice to tell her story so that the reader gains an appreciation of Wanda's perception of significant events in her life. The section, Planting Seeds, is a presentation of Wanda's views on her teaching practices and on her students.

Wanda was very generous in our interviews and expressed herself in an open manner that allowed me to capture the pain as well as the joy in her life story.

> *You know I might become emotional at some point because some of this story, a lot of this story, much of this story - its not this story its my story - much of it is really painful. And so I think that is another reason I did not want to do too much preparing because I wanted you to have the full effect of the story. So if there are*

tears let there be tears...it has not been a bed of roses. It's been a very difficult journey and I don't see it getting any lighter.

And it is a journey that Wanda graciously shared with me. It is a journey that she wanted other racially marginalized people to know was possible. It is also a journey that Wanda wants White people to know is both painful and necessary in order for racially marginalized people to succeed in a society which creates and sustains White privilege.

A Story of a Life Lived

> *There is a Negro spiritual...speaking about the end of the road, death: "When I leave this place may the lives that I touch speak for me". And I think that could be my theme song. That is really what I want. I want my work to speak for itself...*
>
> *Dr. Wanda Bernard-Thomas*
> *June, 2001*

Dr. Wanda Thomas Bernard's Story

Dr. Wanda Thomas Bernard was born into a family of twelve children. She is African-Canadian raised in East Preston, a small Black community outside Dartmouth, Nova Scotia. Wanda attended a segregated school until grade eight. She then entered an integrated school. The August prior to Wanda entering the integrated school her father was killed in a tragic car accident. These events, the move to an integrated school and her father's death had a profound effect on Wanda's life.

> *I think my awareness of many issues started when I went to integrated school. I was twelve years old. It was the same year my father died. I feel like my whole life changed when I was twelve. I don't feel like I had an adolescence because at the age of twelve I was helping my mother raise the younger children. So I always went home immediately after school.*

Wanda had a difficult time adjusting to life at home after her father died. Then in the integrated school, she was screened into a high academic program in which she was the only Black student. She felt isolated from her White classmates as well as from her Black relatives and friends:

> *I was depressed to the point of being suicidal and no one recognized it. I was in*

a place where on one hand I had White students who were saying " you don't belong here" and on the other hand I had Black friends and relatives - I mean they weren't just friends - I was related to half the people in the community - saying "you don't fit with us either", and I had lost my father and I had all of these responsibilities. It was not pleasant, at all. I was dying, ... really dying and nobody knew. I didn't tell anyone about it, couldn't tell anyone. And if the teachers had picked up on it; but, the fact that I was sitting there in the classroom and I was quiet and I was working and doing well - they thought it was wonderful. They didn't see anything wrong.

Spindler (1987) states that the basic theme of his case study of a child named Beth Anne "is the influence of the teacher's culture and the school upon perceptions and interpretations of children's behavior" (p. 230). Spindler states that this case study illustrates a teacher's tendency to select children "for the fruits of success in our social system or for the ignominy of defeat and alienation on the basis of undeclared, and probably unknown, cultural bias" (p. 241). He adds that teachers tend to view the children that they view as adjusted more favorably than children seen as not adjusted. Spindler states that the teachers in the study tended to view adjustment as "an adaptation to the situation as defined by teachers, by rules, and, by the culture which the school represented" (p. 242). "The culturally induced blindness of her [Beth-Anne's] teachers" (p. 243) prevented the teachers from observing the child's situation realistically. This can result in the child undergoing severe emotional cost, which is often entirely overlooked by the child's teachers. In her story, Wanda recounts that "I was dying, dying, really dying and nobody knew…the fact that I was sitting there in the

classroom and I was quiet and I was working and doing well - they thought it was wonderful. They didn't see anything wrong". It appears that Wanda's teachers viewed her positive academic performance as an indication that she was adjusted and performing well in all aspects of her life.

At the age of fifteen, Wanda went directly from grade eleven into Mount Saint Vincent University. The curriculum of the Bachelor of Arts program at her new academic site did not reflect her own experiences.

> *We had a course in African-American history. It was a wonderful course on African American history but you know I needed to know my own history (laughter)... I wasn't learning anything about me. And then I remember, the nuns, the sisters, taking us to Neptune Theater because they felt we needed to be exposed to more culture. The message to me very clearly was 'the culture you bring to this university isn't acceptable. So we really must expose you to the finer things in life'. I come from a very rich cultural heritage but I certainly wasn't made to feel that that this was important or relevant.*

The transition to University life proved difficult for Wanda and she left Mount Saint Vincent after only one year because of a poor academic performance. Wanda believes her experiences at Mount St. Vincent taught her a valuable lesson:

> *...flunking out, I think I learned a valuable lesson from that; a lesson that I would not have gotten if I had gone to university and things were easy. I would not have learned the value of working hard. I would not have learned the value of delayed gratification. I would not have learned - school had always come easy to me.*

Wanda left University for two years to work at minimum wage jobs. With the thought that "life has got to be better than this" she returned to Mount Saint Vincent. Within three years she had graduated with her Bachelor of Arts with a major in both Psychology and Sociology. She went on to graduate with her Masters in Social Work.

We all know resilient people like Wanda. But what accounts for their resilience? Because it is not that people like Wanda just survive. It is almost as if her experiences have made her stronger. Dr. Paul Steinhauer (1998) explains that resilience revolves around three key factors: Personality, relationships with other people and family experiences. Being generally brighter than average and likeable helps a resilient child survive. Wanda's intelligence means she can think of ways to help her own situation. Being likeable encourages people outside the family to reach out and provide support. In Wanda's case teachers liked her and felt lucky to have her in their classes. A family friend made it possible for her to go to university. Finally within her own family, a resilient child may make a connection to a grandmother or significant other that eases some of the pain within the immediate home situation. In Wanda's life, it was her maternal grandmother who had a positive influence. Wanda credits her grandmother with shaping many of her positive personality traits. As well as connection to other people, resilient children tend to cling to school or something bigger than their family life. The feeling of competence that this allows the child is a crucial factor in building resilience (Bernard, 2002). Children who are good at something feel good about themselves. Wanda excelled at school. She was an excellent student and others recognized this fact.

After graduation she worked in various community agencies. During these years

Wanda showed the caring and empathy for her clients that she would eventually express to her students:

> *Most of the children's families that came to the hospital were poor or working class. They were from all over the province. I didn't want people coming from Cape Breton on Monday to see me when I could go to the hospital to see them on Friday nights when they were coming to pick up their children or on Sunday night when they were returning them. So I would go on a Friday night and meet with families and then go back on Sunday night when they were returning the children to see how they were doing, and to give them an opportunity to talk with me.*

During this time period she also was instrumental in creating the Black Social Worker's Association, an organization that continues to provide a voice for both African Nova Scotians and clients. Her efforts to create this organization resulted in her being harassed by her White colleagues.

> *While I was working at the Nova Scotia hospital...I was never totally satisfied with the way things were - the status-quo...I started the Association of Black Social Workers with three other people. We used to have our meetings at my office at the hospital and then after they left, I would hear comments like "what is going on here; is this some kind of uprising?" Imagine, four Black women (laughter) we were a threat? So we started meeting in one another's home.... I didn't want to deal with those kinds of questions. It was harassment. It was harassment. Some of them might say they were joking but I didn't take it as a joke at all. And I don't think it was a joke. But it was very intimidating for them*

to see four Black women - to see me meeting with three Black women. We were organizing the Association of Black Social Workers, which is still going today. In 2002 ABSW will receive the Distinguished Service Award from the Canadian Association of Social Workers, in recognition of their history of service and the fight for social justice.

With her creation of the Black Social Workers Association, Wanda challenged the status quo within the social working community. I saw first-hand the resistance that Wanda faced from the original branch of the Social Workers Association who were adamant that there was no racial inequality within their organization. Delpit (1995) observes that the power of the status quo is maintained by White people acting as if power does not exist. Tatum (1997) agrees that those who enjoy power and privilege have little reason to question the status quo. With the creation of the Black Social Worker's Association, Wanda was not only questioning but also challenging the racial inequalities that existed, not only for Black social workers but also Black clients. According to Hayes (2001) even through the naming of the Black Social Workers Association, Wanda would raise indignation and resentment in many of her White colleagues who were not used to being specifically designated by their race. Hayes asserts that White people do not want to face the concept of a White racial identity because this would expose the White privilege that is part of our institutional and political framework.

After she graduated with her Masters of Social Work, she continued to be involved with the school's committee on racial and ethnic affairs. As well, she continued to encourage the school to diversify both its curriculum and faculty. She began to teach at

an Eastern University as a sessional teacher in 1982 because she *"wanted to make a difference in the student's lives"* and continued in this capacity teaching various courses until 1989 when she was offered a full time teaching position.

Wanda received her Ph.D from Sheffield University in England in 1996 and was awarded a tenureship at an Eastern University in 2000. The courses she has taught include Cross-Cultural Issues for Social Workers, Advanced Social Work Practice, and The Theory and Practice of Anti-oppressive Social Work. Through these courses and her advocacy work for students, Wanda touched the lives of the majority of the students in the program. Wanda introduced many of the White students to the issue of racism and oppression. For the racially marginalized students, she was both a role model and a support.

> *I am not here just for the Black student. I am here for all students. I want all students that come here to feel that this is a good learning experience...Quite frankly, I think quite a number of my Black students are glad that they no longer need to be the expert. They can come to my class and learn. They are not expected to teach. In other classes, they are expected to teach and be the experts on the Black experience ...They can come to my class and just be students.*

In March 1991, I was a student of Wanda's. My husband had unexpectedly received a job offer that required us to move to the Northwest Territories. It meant that I would have to finish my degree before we left Halifax in July, 1991; ten months before I was scheduled to complete my required course work. When I approached the university administration, I was told it would not be possible for me to finish my degree within

that time period. I happened to discuss this matter with Wanda. She offered me both hope and a constructive plan. She would allow me to come into her summer course created solely for Guyanese students and she would, herself, arrange and supervise my practicum. Wanda received a great deal of resistance for this plan from her White colleagues who did not believe that I should be allowed to go in the summer program offered only to Guyanese students. During our interview Wanda and I talked about her decision to take on this extra workload.

Wanda: *When you came and told me your story, I thought we have to do what we can to help.*

Bern: *You just did not do what you could. There were professors who did not want me in the class...*

Wanda: *I remember that....*

Bern: *I think at the time, your help would have made more sense to me if I had been a Black student.*

Wanda: *I think...academics do have a lot of power and we can use that in a way that hurts and marginalizes people or we can use that to facilitate people's empowerment....*

Because of Wanda's efforts and mentorship, I completed all the required courses by July 1991 and was able to move to the Northwest Territories with my Bachelor of Social Work degree. Wilson (1994) believes "that teachers and counsellors who are able to explore, understand, and accept their own backgrounds are better able to adapt to a diversity of situations" (p. 224). She adds that this makes them better able to establish "rapport with children who are experiencing ordeals similar to ones that they

themselves have had to deal with. They are able to see clearly that their clients are faced with having to make similar choices in confronting confusing situations" (p. 224). Wanda was able to use her own experience with oppression to understand my feelings of helplessness and frustration at an institution that did not want to change its expectations to meet my individual needs. She used her knowledge, influence and power within that educational institution to support me in making and implementing a plan that allowed me to move forward both emotionally and academically.

In July 2001, Dr. Wanda Thomas Bernard became the Director of Social Work at an Eastern University. She is the first African Canadian to ever hold this position. But Wanda does not rely on a title or a job to define her. She believes it is her own actions that create and maintain her sense of self.

> *I am actually a bit uncomfortable with the perceived prestige. I think that people perceive this job to be much more prestigious than it actually is (laughter) ...prestige doesn't mean a lot to me, really.... It is how I am in the world that is important to me.*

Despite the odds, Wanda overcame a traumatic childhood and grew into a successful adult who is an accomplished professional and a loving person. But it is easy to imagine different endings to her story. Most people, especially White people, would not have been surprised if she had failed at her career or sunk into depression. We'd almost expect it. It makes some sense - our experiences do affect us. But the path from a scarred childhood to a miserable adulthood is not inevitable. Benard (2002) states that "policy makers, the media and often researchers themselves have personalized "at-riskness "locating it in youth, their families and their cultures" (p. 1). Benard maintains

that this approach has led to "stereotyping, tracking, lowering of expectations for many students… and even prejudice and discrimination" (p.1). Benard states that it is the individual's resilience that allows them "to develop successfully despite risk and adversity" (p.1). Lifton (1994) identifies resilience as the human capacity of all individuals to transform and change, no matter what their risks. Benard (2002) states that "resilience skills include the ability to form relationships (social competence), to problem solve (metacognition), to develop a sense of identity (autonomy) and to plan and hope (a sense of purpose and future)" (p. 1-2). She adds that "while many social and life skills programs have been developed to teach these skills, the strong message in resilience research is, however, that these attitudes and competencies are outcomes not causes of resilience" (p.2).

Having examined all of these plausible explanations, I admit that I still do not fully understand the reasons for Wanda's resiliency. One of the most important explanations appears to be that her statement "life has got to be better than this" characterizes her life story. Wanda appeared to recognize very early in life that what she was experiencing wasn't what life was supposed to be like and started early in her life to look for the resources she would need to set herself on another path.

The Story of A Life Lived: Racism

During our interviews Wanda provided the following definition of racism:

> *My very simple definition of racism is it is prejudice plus power. A lot of people struggle with that because they think anyone can be racist. I believe that anyone can have prejudice but racism is really that prejudice, that prejudging on the*

basis of race plus the power to make a difference in terms of the people being discriminated against based on their race.

She realizes that this definition may be hard for some to understand and/or accept. She accommodates that in her classroom by encouraging discussion:

...and people have to be free to talk it out. What are you thinking? What is holding you back? What is preventing you from understanding the definition...?

Wanda's definition of racism, which is derived from her own experiences, concurs with the operational definition found in much of the literature dealing with racism (Carmicheal & Hamilton, 1967; Ponterotto & Perdersen, 1993; Dalton, 1995; Miller, 2000). She too finds that it is not the prejudiced attitudes and beliefs of others that have the most detrimental effects on minorities. Rather, it is the power to act on these prejudices through our behavior, decisions and actions that create oppression. Like Wanda, Hayes (2001) urges White people to take responsibility for the White privilege and the racism that ensues from it. These excerpts also support McIntosh's (1992) opinion that many White people see racism as an individual act not as a system that creates dominance for White people.

Wanda continues to encounter people who are either surprised that racism exists at all or resist efforts to be educated on the issue of racism:

I was putting my tenure package together...I put the "Voice of the People" video in there and one of the comments back from the Dean was that she looked at that video and she was profoundly struck by how the issues are still the same – although I did that video in 1991 I think ".

I remember one White student saying to me "My God, I didn't realize there was so much racism around. Maybe there is more than there ever was". And I said, "no, what else could be happening? And she said "I'm seeing it, of course I wasn't seeing it before".

...but again it is the denial of the reality of racism. The reality of cultural differences in this society. The reality of systemic racism. The reality of systemic discrimination.

It is not just the resistance that she encounters when teaching her cross cultural courses that affects Wanda: It is the day to day reality of being a Black woman in an essentially White institution that exists in a portion of Halifax that is populated primarily by White people.

It is not just about teaching the cross cultural course. It's about being a Black woman teaching here....

That resistance is evident in the comments that Wanda hears from her colleagues and community members.

Well, they're really lowering the standards at the Maritime School of Social Work. They have two Black social workers working there teaching for the summer.

It can't be much of a program there if they hired you.

Wanda, I don't know if I should tell you this but some people, some people in

the community are a bit worried with you being the director that this will only be a place for minority people. It will only be a school where minority students are comfortable.

Wanda has the power and prestige of a Directorship in a major University. Miller (2000) states that this type of power can be acquired. However, White privilege is innate and only accessible to White people. Thus, Wanda is denied the power and privileges associated with White privilege no matter how much power and prestige she may acquire through her own diligent efforts. It is not unexpected that she experiences individual and institutional racism everyday because of the color of her skin.

...when I'm out shopping I am treated like any other Black person in this society...until they see something like my drivers license, which has Doctor Thomas Bernard on it, and I have done that deliberately because of the treatment I've had from police. But until they see that, people don't treat me with any degree of respect at all...

The overt racism she experiences on a daily basis, the fact that she needs to worry about where she will live, where to eat lunch, as well as the way the police treat her when she is stopped, surprised me and I wondered at my surprise. I have observed individual and systematic racism directed towards racially marginalized people regardless of their socio-economic status. Logically, I shouldn't be surprised at all at Wanda's experiences. After reflection, I realized that my personal bias had clouded my perception of Wanda's reality. I saw Wanda as a unique individual as well as a respected professional, mentor and friend. However, many people and institutions saw Wanda through their own racist perception. To them she was <u>just</u> a Black women - they

did not look beyond the stereotypes and prejudices that they associated with that fact until they were forced to. And Wanda forces them to look beyond their racist perceptions in many ways: In her reminder to colleagues and students that she expects inclusion and respect as well as the "Doctor" on her driver's license to remind police officers that there are Black as well as White professionals.

Wanda's stories also described potent examples of the racism that she faces on a daily basis within all areas of her life.

> *I have had occasions where I think...race has played a role in terms of how people have acted - the license that they feel they have. Again it is about privilege. It really is about privilege.*

Many researchers would not be surprised by Wanda's experiences; in fact they would appear typical. Hayes (2001) states that there is a "taken for grantness that is Whiteness" (p.17). McIntosh (1992) explains that many White, middle class people view society from a monocultural perspective. This prevents them from realizing that people from other races view themselves in terms of culturally specific identity: Not in relation to the White culture. She adds that to Canadians of European descent Whiteness is akin to normalness. However as Frankenberg (1996) points out, many Euro-Canadians do not define themselves as White. They merely construct themselves as Not being people of color. Wilson (1994) adds that she often encounters Euro-American students who believe they do not have a culture. She adds that this indicates that they do not realize that they transmit culture in their actions, words and expectations.

> *If I really wanted to protect myself against racism I would stay home. I would*

not listen to the radio and I would not watch TV, I would not read the paper and I would not pick up a magazine. I would just stay at home and not answer the door and maybe (laughter) not even answer the telephone. That is the only way to protect yourself against racism, to not engage in the world. But you have to engage in the world. So if you engage in the world how do you protect yourself? One of the things that I do is that I don't want to walk the streets and deal with this stuff on my lunchtime, which is supposed to be a relaxing time. I rather eat in my office so I know I am not going to have an offensive experience...that is my reality. And in the south end of Halifax, absolutely. I walk down the street or go down to Spring Garden Road, I don't see too many people who look like me. And there are not a lot of safe places around here (south end Halifax).

Scheurich (1993) observes that the longer one group is dominant, the more effectively "the styles of thinking, acting, speaking, and behaving of the dominant group...become the socially correct or privileged ways of thinking, acting, speaking, and behaving" (p.7). Wanda does not belong to the dominant racial group. Thus she lives in a society that reminds her that she is not viewed as "normal". These reminders come in the form of racism that limits her choice in housing and resources for her family.

That is considered being normal (being White)...they don't have the same kind of issues...I have to think about where we move to if we decide to move. I have to think of where would be a safe place to live and where to raise children.

I always worked twice as hard as the average person in the same position and

that is a part of how racism has affected me. I know that I have to work two or three times as hard, just to be seen as credible. What happens is then people see me as exceptional, but what they don't realize is that I have worked so hard to get recognition that they get anyway...That is the one thing I find I can still get pretty angry about.

Wanda's successes are often viewed from an individual, not a cultural, perspective. Sheurich (1993) maintains that the mainstream Western belief in individualism helps to hide the social inequities caused by racism. This is done by attributing the success and failure to the behavior and characteristics of each person rather than to patterns of access and opportunity (Harry, 1992). Scheurich (1993) states that the focus on the individual functions not only as a goal in White culture but also as an explanation for differences in status and achievement. Stanton-Salazar (1997) states that individualism is geared towards preserving White privilege and power. McIntosh (1992) agrees that White privilege opens doors for White people through no virtue of their own. She adds that White people's lives are shaped by the opportunities that exist for them simply because they are White and benefit from White privilege. Dalton (1995) also agrees that racism consists of culturally acceptable ideas, beliefs and attitudes that serve to sustain White privilege.

Even though Wanda deals with racism on a daily basis, she had hoped that racism would be less of an issue for her daughter. Wanda relates how she felt when she found out that even though she and her daughter are from different generations, their experiences on entering an integrated school were similar:

She had such a problem with racism... we put her in private school for grade

primary and then in public school for grade one. Well, we didn't know we had a teacher who...was very racist. She was the only Black student in her class and one of two Black students in the school. The other Black student in the school was a child who was mentally challenged and in the special education class. So the kids in her class were terrible. They were only doing things that they learned at home. But she wanted to change her color. One day she came home and she wanted to bathe in the evening and we always did morning baths. I said why do you want two baths in one day? She was trying to rub off the color. She did not want to be Black anymore. I thought "oh my goodness, I haven't prepared her to deal with this at this stage of life" and things just went from bad to worse. And she became depressed and I could see it.

... I really thought that things were going to be easier for her. I hadn't prepared her at the age of six to deal with racism, individual, and systemic racism. I had not prepared her for that because I didn't really expect that it would happen. I felt terrible about that. I felt that I should have known better. But I had sort of rested and thought things had changed. But they haven't (pause) and they still haven't. They really still haven't.

In his discussion of the relationship of the oppressor and the oppressed, Freire (1970) states that the oppressed are dehumanized by internalizing the image of the oppressor. In Wanda's daughter's case, she had internalized the negative view of Black people that she received from her school environment. This internalization maintains the status, power and domination of the oppressors because the oppressed have

accepted their superiority. In Wanda's daughter's situation, there was a desire to become White in order to feel normal or accepted.

As a young woman, Wanda found inspiration for her fight against racism, in the larger Black community. She was attracted to role models that attempted to change the systems that were supporting and perpetuating racism.

> *I had examples of people fighting systems. I was a student of Dr. Martin Luther King; I was a student of Malcolm X... Well, I learned a valuable lesson. That you could take on a system and win.*

However, Wanda recognizes that only looking at the huge issue of institutional racism can be overwhelming. So, although she is aware of the big picture, she feels that she maintains her energy and enthusiasm when she fights racism at a local level.

> *Looking at that big picture can be overwhelming. It can immobilize you and I never want to be immobilized. I always want to be doing something. Being part of the struggle. There is always something to be done. Think globally, but act locally.*
>
> *...if I can see some success, some growth, some empowerment then I feel I have done a good job. If I can see that with one person, one client, one family, then I feel I have done a worthwhile job. So I had to give up a long time ago that notion of saving the world instead I do it one person at a time.*

Wanda also supplied a definition for anti-racist practice. She talks specifically about anti-racist social work practice but one can easily apply it to all professional work.

> *Anti racist practice means you are actually taking some action to challenge the racism you see in your practice. Anti racist social work is really about naming*

racism and helping other people see it. And dealing with it. It is not just the individual acts of racism but also challenging institutional racism.

Wanda's opinion on anti-racist practice is congruent with that cited by Hayes (2001). He states that a White anti-racist identity requires a conscious effort. He maintains that White people must act to end racism. He concludes that if White people do not act, then they perpetuate the system of White privilege. McIntosh (1992) cautions that individual acts alone cannot end racism. She maintains that racism must be dealt with on a systematic basis if White privilege is to be eradicated.

With all the racism she sees and experiences, one would expect Wanda to be bitter or angry: To use her power as an educator to repress people who do not hold her views. But Wanda sees her role as an educator and role model as an important means of teaching both tolerance and anti-racist techniques. Again, although she addresses social workers specifically, her philosophy can easily be applied to counsellors.

Well as I said, I might go home, I might scream, I might cry in the shower, I might bang my pillow, I might meditate, I might write. But when I am in that classroom, I need to be able to hear both sides. I need to be able to understand where the resistance is coming from to be able to help them move along. I don't do any good if I trash people in that process. If I make people feel bad. If I repress people in that process then I am not really doing the job that needs to be done because they are going to go away feeling like "I'm not going there". If they experience it as oppressive, if they experience the professor as oppressive, then that really affects the learning.

...that is how I view the world. That is how I view it and that is how I view these issues. I mean you can spend a lot of energy about what has happened in the past. Feeling guilty about what your ancestors did. You can spend a lot of energy there. But I would see that as wasted energy. I think it is much more powerful if we use that energy to look at what we can do to make a difference now and in the future. For me that is really what it is about.

I don't see myself as being here to maintain the status quo...When people like myself are in these positions we have a certain responsibility as educators - we're educators and not just people of color; all educators have a responsibility not just in terms of the messages that they pass on but the skills that they should be teaching students in terms of how to be in the world and how to affect change. I take that responsibility very seriously. I'm not just here earning a pay cheque. I am here making a contribution to society and the greater good of society really...The ripple effect can be quite liberating when you think of the potential.

Wanda believes that she has a commitment to both herself as well as to her community to work at eradicating racism.

I am not just here for me. I am really here for the community. If I allow it to discourage me then it is really the community that suffers...

Wanda's own experiences with racism serve as examples of how powerful and destructive racism is. APA (2000) states that racism is powerful and destructive because it allows negative prejudice to become the basis for discrimination against

racial groups. Comer (1980) and Pinderhughes (1973) state that racism is the use of repressive actions to systematically maintain the dominance of one group over another and the belief that the dominant group is superior to the oppressed group. Miller (2000) agrees that racism does not exist in a vacuum, but rather is enacted and reinforced through social, cultural, and institutional practices that endorse the hierarchical power of one racial group over another. The hurt that Wanda feels as a result of racism is not merely due to race prejudice, but rather, the power that the offender has to impose it and the powerlessness that the victim appears to have to eradicate it.

A Story of a Life Lived: Rest and Replenishment

> *...I won't rest - I can't rest. There is too much to be done. You know, until all of us are free, none of us are free. I won't allow myself to be comfortable with where I am in life when my sisters and brothers are struggling to make ends meet. When in some communities the unemployment rate is over 70%. When we have people coming to our church whose children currently in school are not reading and writing where they should be. I can't rest. I have to be out there fighting for those kinds of changes, supporting those kind of changes. And also being a vision of hope for some people. People look at me and say, "if Wanda can do that, I think I can too". So until those things - until that massive change happens, I can't rest. And I can't allow myself to get tired either or get burned out.*

Wanda's passionate words speak to her commitment to eradicate racism. But her commitment does not come without a cost. She is not immune to the fear that often

accompanies a life journey that is filled with the pain and racism that she has endured.

> *I remember one of my brothers he didn't say it to me - he wrote it in a card. He was a high school dropout and he wrote in this card: "if I had half the courage that you had, I think I might have done some different things in my life". I remember picking up the phone and phoning him and saying "look I don't have any courage. I just feel the fear and do it anyway. I have been afraid half my life (laughter) but I have not allowed fear to hold me back and I guess that is the difference. I won't let fear hold me back. If I had I wouldn't be here. I would have done something drastic or stupid a long time ago. I wouldn't have got out of high school I don't think. I sometimes think back to that first year in that integrated high school and the trauma and the depression and the suicidal thoughts and I realize that I could have ended it there...*

She has made a conscious decision to go forward in her fight against racism on her own terms. Terms that she thinks will put her energy where it will achieve the greatest results. She knows that if she takes on all the racism she experiences, it would be overwhelming both physically and mentally.

> *If I was to take every insult that ever happened to me personally, I would already be dead. I would have died of a heart attack caused by stress. I made a conscious decision that I do want to live for a long time. When I first came to...[name of university] and things were really bad for some time, I remember I used to say to people "I've got to keep me intact; I have to look after myself because I don't want to leave here in a box". I don't know if people really understood what I was saying but I was basically saying that I don't want this*

job to kill me. In order to survive, I have learned to politicize not personalize, to really choose my battles. I don't walk away from every situation but I take on battles that I know I can win. I also take on battles that I know are going to have a larger impact so it is not the personal insults that I may choose to challenge. It is the more structural institutional issues that I might challenge.

In order to ensure that she does not become "tired or burned out", Wanda makes time for the people and experiences in her life that sustain both her energy and her passion for her work. One area of her life that allows her to replenish herself is her family life.

I'm from a large family. I would say I have...three sisters who are friends and that's been a real positive thing in my life. And then the person I'm married to, George, he taught me how to love. He is such a warm, caring, loving person that you couldn't live with him and not learn to do that as well...and being a mother and a stepmother has helped me to be more open in the rest of the world.

Another essential ingredient that allows Wanda to replenish is contact with other Black professionals. Despite having wonderful colleagues in her workplace and in the larger community of social work educators and social activists, Wanda still finds it essential to connect with Black colleagues in order to feel fully understood. One example of this occurred when she convinced the administration at the Eastern University that she needed to attend a conference for Black social workers. Wanda found that this conference allowed her a freedom that she had never before felt.

There were three thousand people there - Black people...It was the first time I

have ever gone to a conference where I could speak, raise questions, engage in dialogue and not have to explain what I meant, not have to justify. It was a freeing experience. It was wonderful...

Wanda describes the conference for Black social workers as a unique but affirming event for her. However, every conference, lecture and professional event that I attend is comprised primarily of White participants and speakers. I have never consciously recognized this fact before hearing Wanda's story. In fact, if anything, I viewed this fact as normal. This emphasizes the point made by McIntosh (1992) and Hayes (2001) that White culture is seen and experienced as the norm. White people experience their own culture as normalness. However, Weis et al. (1997) warns that the invisibility of Whiteness is "historically, socially, politically, and culturally...linked to…relations of domination. (p. 22).

Wanda also reaches back into the past to her ancestors in order to replenish her resolve to move forward.

I think of my ancestors and compare the resources that I have to what they had to work with - they worked with nothing... In my mother's generation she was not allowed to go to school beyond grade eight. My issue was feeling racism in grade eight, but she was not allowed to go to school beyond grade eight. I think of those issues a lot. I meditate and I think - I don't live in the past - but I try to look for lessons from the past.

During her life, Wanda has wondered at the meaning of the events that have happened to her or those around her. She feels that she allows herself to be guided by a higher power and often looks to this higher power for meaning in times of confusion or

hardship.

> *Sometimes I ask God to tell me what the message is here...That is one of the things I learned from my grandmother. When tragedy happens, you try and find something positive in it.*

In many racially marginalized cultures, grandmothers traditionally taught their granddaughters many life skills. "However, they were transmitting something far beyond the technical "how to" knowledge. Through their hands came the culture. Through their stories came the wisdom of how to live" (Taos Art School, 2002, p. 1). Leung (1993) states that many racially marginalized groups put the emphasis on the collective group rather than the individual. He maintains that kinship is seen as an essential connection that not only allows for resources to be shared, but also culture to be transmitted.

Wanda has learned to not only endure the stress and pressure that are ever present in both her job and her advocacy work; she has also learned to thrive in that environment. She realizes that it is important to put it all in perspective in order to just survive. Throughout her journey, Wanda has maintained a balance of rest and work that has allowed her to deal with the struggles, disappointments and heavy workloads she has endured. She has worked hard to achieve this balance in her life. This is the balance that allows her to cope, to manage, and to deal with the challenges. It is part of her survival. And she continues to cope and survive in order to leave a positive legacy, not only for the world, but also her daughter and stepchildren.

> *I am very conscious of the kind of legacy that I leave...not only for the world but also for my daughter in particular and also my stepchildren. There were times*

that I thought suicide might be an option. That is not the kind of legacy that I want to leave them. I'd rather die fighting...I think the other reason I stay pretty grounded is that I don't want to be bitter. I've been bitter. I have been through that kind of phase in my life...and I don't want to live like that. I made a decision that I won't live like that.

Wanda's story reflects the negative impact that racism can have on those who endure it. But after ten years of cross-cultural work, racism was also taking its toll on me. It was always difficult and often discouraging to observe so much blatant racism both on an individual and at an institutional level. I began to concentrate on the institutional racism that exists and became almost immobilized it. It began to seem insignificant to me that I was helping one person or client when racism affected so many. I had failed to build up a support system of others who supported anti racism and I was beginning to feel isolated and discouraged.

I began this thesis as a way of examining that discouragement. I felt that I had begun to look for reasons to discontinue my anti-racist practice. But something inside of me told me that wasn't the answer for me either. Interviewing Wanda was a way of attempting to recapture the feeling that I could make a positive difference. For this reason, it was important that I interviewed Wanda in Halifax, Nova Scotia. I used the time in between interviews to retrace my steps as a student and visit many places that held significance for me at that time. To remember who I was then and the small positive differences I had made to many lives because of whom I had become. Again, as so often in the past, Wanda served as my mentor during these interviews. Through the stories and laughter we shared, I came away with a deeper understanding of both

the negative effects of racism and the value of anti-racist work. When I left Wanda, I reviewed our interviews as I transcribed each tape. As I listened I allowed her words to permeate my thoughts. Her experiences and words again became lessons for me. These lessons renewed my passion for anti-racist work. I realized that Wanda and other people of color have no choice but to struggle against racism everyday.

> *It is a constant struggle. Everyday I face a new challenge and I wonder how I am going to deal with this one.*

In learning from Wanda's struggle, I am reminded that I need to build alliances that encourage and support anti-racist work. Tatum (1994) states that White people require allies if they are going to be a force in the construction of an anti-racist society. Titone (1999) adds that this is not just an alliance with racially marginalized groups; it is also an alliance with other White people who fight against racism. Hayes (2001) reminds us that it is not just acceptable to denounce racism by ignoring or denouncing racist individuals. White people must view all possible courses of action within the parameters of a social structure that created and supports White privilege.

A Story of A Life Lived: Dealing with White Privilege

Wanda uses her power as an educator to introduce the issue of power and privilege to all her students in a manner that engages them in anti-racist work. However, it is particularly important to her that White students, particularly White males, understand these issues and join the struggle as anti-racist professionals. Wanda's message is similar to that of Tatum (1994) and Titone (1999). She understands that allies are important in the work against racism and consciously and deliberately cultivates them.

She understands that White people; especially White males hold a great deal of power and influence in our society. Delpit (1995) states that people with power tend to lack awareness or acknowledgement of its existence. However he adds that members of the subordinate group are very aware of their own lack of power and the power of the dominant group. McIntosh (1992) maintains that White people are not taught to recognize how their status as White people confers on them many privileges. Wanda encourages White people to understand that they must examine their White privilege and actively work against racism. However, Wanda realizes that many of her White students are confused and defensive when they are faced with discussions on racism. Scheurich and Young (1997) state that this denial is created by White peoples belief that racism is an individual problem. They maintain that most White people do not consider themselves racist and may speak out or act against racism. However, their belief that racism is an individual phenomenon is a barrier to a more comprehensive understanding of racism.

> *If I treated White males with any kind of disdain, then I really wouldn't be doing what I feel needs to be done in terms of how we should be different in the world and how institutions should be different. And until we have a systemic change we really are going to have White males running most of our institutions. So I would rather have them as partners in the struggle than as enemies or as invisible non-racists. I don't need them to be non-racist; I need them to be anti-racist. I think it is a little bit easier to engage women in the struggle because they know their own struggles. It is a little bit more difficult to engage White males because they haven't owned struggles - for the majority of them - this is*

so new to them. They haven't really thought about it. They also have their own fears about embodying so much privilege and power that they fear that they are going to get beat up on in class. They don't just fear that from me, they also fear it from their classmates. But it is important for them to realize the amount of power and privilege that they do have.

Wanda believes that White students need to be prepared for what they will hear from colleagues, friends and family members. She speaks on this issue in class to prepare students and to offer an opportunity to discuss it.

It is because they are in a privileged space. The White bodied space. I think that is part of the responsibility to prepare students for the things that they will deal with.

Hayes (2001) and McIntosh (1992) would agree with Wanda that her White students are indeed in a privileged space. Hayes asserts that Whites live in a social formation that confers levels of privilege on them because they are defined and linked within that social formation as White. McIntosh adds that White privilege is an invisible package of unearned assets that one earns simply by being White. Hayes (2001) concludes that we as White people cannot exclude ourselves from the privileges attached to our skin color and culture. He adds that White people must establish a new set of social relationships that allow for the possibility for anti-racist political action.

Wanda understands that it is difficult for White people to willingly give up the power and privilege that they possess.

No matter how enlightened you are. When your power base is threatened the tendency is to fight back, to try to hold on to power.

I think that part of the problem is there is so much gain in not speaking out. They do not see the loss. White people don't want to see it. Most White people do not want to talk about what would be gained.

Wanda recognizes the difficulty involved in asking those with power to share it. Tatum (1997) claims that those who benefit from privilege have little apparent reason to question what has always been assumed to be true. Delpit (1995) adds that not questioning the status quo results in the power balance remaining the same. McLaren (1998) cautions that there is an unwillingness to let go of a racial identity that has required much time and effort in the making. He adds that we must expect that it will take at least as much effort to move our identity in a different direction.

Wanda believes that White students need to be able to feel affirmed for the positive choices that they make in their anti-racist work and she attempts to build that affirmation into her feedback to students. Tatum (1994) suggest that White people who have begun questioning racism and the systems that maintain and perpetuate it, may feel as if they have been cut off from the basis of their identity and become immobilized by both the magnitude of the problem and their lack of support by their White peers. Wanda recognizes her White students' need to be supported in their anti-racist work and incorporates that support into her teaching.

I think affirming people for the positive choices they make as a way of refueling the energy. So that will help you to keep going and to keep the staying power...you'll need

to stay in the fight. To stay in the struggle.

Planting Seeds

> *What I try and do is plant seeds... I don't try and beat them over the head and say "this is the way you have to behave, this is the way you think, this is the way you have to see the world. You have to see the world according to Wanda Thomas Bernard. I basically raise ideas, put out some issues, plant some seeds...let that sink into people's subconscious and let that take hold...its like planting seeds. If it grabs, you are going to have a beautiful flower or beautiful plants...and I am thankful for each one.*

In her role as an educator, Wanda reaches out to all students but is conscious that it is the students who respond and recognize the seriousness of racism and oppression that make her work gratifying and worthwhile.

> *Yes I take it very seriously. What I appreciated was when students responded in that way and recognized the seriousness of it. And that they take it on. What I have come to realize is that I can't expect all students to be that way. So now I adopt the attitude that if I can get one student per year that gets excited and is prepared to carry the torch, then I feel I have done a good job. I don't go for the whole class anymore.*

> *I don't see it as my having to start over with each group. I see it as a new group. Let's see if I can find some stars here. And for me stars are not people who make "A's but the people who catch the passion.*

There is always a shining star; there is usually more than one but I only look for one. I only hope for or expect one, but usually there is more than one. In my Africentric course, there were twelve that worked with me over two years. They wanted to turn their learning into learning for the wider community. That was something to celebrate.

Someone asked, "what is your vision for the school?" And I started off by saying that I want all students who come here to feel good when they leave here. To be ambassadors because they had a good learning experience. All students should have that privilege.

Wanda's definition of an educator summarizes her own unique style in the classroom. Wanda's eagerness to encourage her students to take their new knowledge and passion from the classroom into the community is congruent with her message that professionals should always maintain their own passion for learning.

A wonderful teacher realizes that there is still a lot to learn - there is always something to learn. There is always something new. You have to be open to learning. And I expect to learn from my students as well. That is why I take course evaluations very seriously. And that is why I started looking for more immediate feedback instead of at the end of the year because I want those students to benefit from the things that they see that could be improved...

I see learning as extending beyond the walls of the classroom

I allow people to look at their own workplace and look at what is there. Look at the positives that are there and look at the problems...So it was really about them looking and taking hold of the power that they had to affect change and to figure out a way to do that inclusively. It is not something that they can impose on someone...it has to engage and involve people.

I also organize assignments in a way that they can do a lot of preparatory work through assignments...so the thinking about it and the planning can happen as part of the class...I am giving them support. Saying yes this is possible.

However, even in a classroom where open discussion is encouraged and modeled, Wanda finds that recently there is a reluctance to ask questions.

...if you don't ask the question then you go away with all sorts of assumptions, or you go away feeling wounded...People should be able to ask those questions in the classroom. And that is part of what I am seeing now. For the last couple of years I have seen a real conservative kind of swing. That makes me really nervous. It really does.... Most people are afraid to ask, afraid to ask the "wrong" thing.

While doing her Ph.D, Wanda began, for the first time, to recognize the power and privilege she possessed as a healthy, educated, heterosexual woman who holds a powerful position within a Canadian University. Wanda used her new insight as an educational tool to model power sharing in her classrooms. This is congruent with Wanda's anti-racist philosophy. She defines racism as prejudice plus power. By

recognizing her own power, she limits the power others can have over her. By sharing her power with her students she is modeling behavior that is the core of anti-racist practice.

> *I guess one of the things that I have learned since I taught you in that course is that I have some power as well. I never used to think of that. I used to think of the oppression. The oppression based on race. Oppression historically based on class. The oppression based on gender. I never thought of the privileges I had or the power I had. The unearned privilege I had as a heterosexual woman, being a part of the younger generation, educated, able bodied, healthy. Those are all privileges. And those privileges all bring a certain amount of power. And being a professor - professors in universities have a lot of power over students. We can use that power or abuse it. And I think one of the great lessons for me was to model power sharing in the classroom. What I am trying to do there is not just making a difference with the students in the class with me, but it is also modeling for them how they can share power with their clients.*

Once again, Wanda uses a life lesson to ensure that others benefit from her new knowledge.

> *So it has affected the way I organize the course. It affects the way I teach the course. Not just that course, but my other teaching as well. It has affected the way I am with people because I now see people more holistically. Before I was tending to compartmentalize people based on whether I thought they were privileged or not privileged...it is not that simple because we embody privilege as a White skinned person but as a woman you experience gender oppression...*

I have learned to understand the intersecting and interlocking nature of oppression.

Wanda realizes that it is her personality and approach to teaching that may attract students' attention to the issues she discusses. However, it is the congruency between who she is and what she teaches that inspires the lasting change she sees in many students.

I think it is beyond personality though. It is not just personality. It is a piece of it. It is also philosophy, it's also congruency; really it's about the congruency. It's not just the content of what you're teaching; it's also the process of teaching. And it is not just about the teaching; it's the way you live your life. You can't just talk about it. It is not a theoretical construct; it's really the convergence of theory and practice; of content and process. And people really have to struggle to get that to fit.

Wanda's story is one that emphasizes congruency more than anything else. She lives what she teaches. She teaches her class to fight racism while she is actively fighting racism in the school and in the community. She teaches them to share their power as professionals while she models power sharing in the classroom. She teaches them to recognize their privilege while she examines her own. She tells them to reach out to those who need support while she reaches out to community members and students who benefit from her guidance and commitment. She tells students that they need to build a support system while she puts energy into building her own. Wanda feels that this congruency is essential in anti-racist work. It is not just a certain personality type or a single incident: it is how you live your life.

Students' Feedback to Wanda

As Wanda shared her stories with me, there were other stories interwoven into her own. Many of these stories were feedback Wanda had heard from students about her affect on their lives. Other stories reflect the influence that she had on her students' actions. Wanda was also surprised that she had meant so much to so many. She found it difficult to comprehend the magnitude of her contribution to her students.

> *There were a number of letters sent [for her tenureship]. These letters mentioned really little things that I didn't think much of at all. That didn't seem to me to be significant. So I was surprised by the things people experienced as significant in their lives based on their contact with me. Absolutely.*

It is the satisfaction of simply doing her job that Wanda focuses on.

> *I don't really acknowledge what I do or what I give...I see it all as a day's work. I don't see what I do as extra-ordinary...I certainly don't dismiss what I do or what I bring... I guess I don't need that kind of acknowledgement and I don't need to give myself that kind of acknowledgment. I feel good about what I do. I feel good about my teaching.*

During the time I spent interviewing Wanda, I commented frequently on how modest she was about her accomplishments, especially the positive difference she has made in many of her students' lives. Wanda always received my words with humility and often attempted to give all the credit to her students, her ancestors or her family. At the time, I really felt that it was important that Wanda acknowledge her contribution. However, as I wrote this thesis and reflected on Wanda's words and philosophy, I

realized that Wanda was again being congruent. She believes that we must take responsibility for our own actions and words. She teaches her students that it is only by taking responsibility for ourselves that can we make a difference for others. She gives her students full credit for their successes when they act in an anti-racist manner because she expects them to bare the responsibility if they do not.

The following stories are in Wanda's own words. These stories reinforce that mine is not the only life that Wanda has affected so significantly as both a teacher and a mentor:

> *When I was applying for the Director's job, he wrote that he saw me as an exceptional person because I took an interest in him as a human being. I mean isn't that what life is about.*

> *And the first assignment is they need to explore their own culture... And there was an older student...she thanked me at the end of the course because she actually explored her cultural heritage for the first time in her life and the woman is 61 years old.*

> *I remember one White man from Cape Breton - part of the time I just thought he was being the devil's advocate because he would raise these really provocative questions. He actually became quite a strong advocate...and he talked about the learning from cross-cultural...*

> *But one of the most exciting things that has happened from that anti-oppressive*

course...I had a woman who was a supervisor in a child welfare agency. And one of the things I really try and get people to do is look at oppression in their own work place.... She set up an anti-oppressive committee in the workplace- I think that was in 1996 and that committee is still going... the committee deals with everything in the work place from looking at the pictures on the wall, the magazines in the waiting room to make sure diversity is reflected to staffing to training...they are doing all of that and that idea happened in one of my classes in 1995-1996. My daughter Candace (she is also a social worker) later got a job in that agency and became a member of the committee. She recently did an outstanding presentation to a large number of her colleagues on anti-oppressive practice in child welfare. I feel so privileged and blessed to be part of such a wonderful story...

Another women from my class.... set up a whole anti-oppressive, diversity-training program for their staff. They are involving the residents as members of each committee now...so we are creating change in the workplace.

...one woman ...We were talking and reminiscing and she was talking about that course and how profound it was. She is a bi-racial person. And for her it was the first time that she felt she could embrace all of who she was. That course was a turning point for her...

There was one woman that I convinced to go back to do her Master's. When she

walked into my class in September she said "Wanda you're the only reason I am here"...It wasn't that she didn't think she could do it. But she had such a profound racist experience here with one professor in particular. She said, "I never wanted to see (Eastern University) again".

She came up to me at the end - I think it was the last class and said "Wanda, in all the courses I have taken here you are the first professor that has made me feel like I could do something to change what is happening. I have been taught really well how to critique community services, how to critique government but no one ever taught me I could do something about it and I want to thank you for that.

Many students have done just that; thanked Wanda for the experiences she allowed them to have and encouraged them to explore which has enhanced their cultural knowledge. Wanda believes that these experiences provide students with the opportunity to make a difference. Although she acknowledges that making this positive difference can take a toll both mentally and physically, she knows that it also provides hope: Not only for others but for those who make the difference as well.

I have learned that my experiences form a lens through which I see the world and interact in it. I have learned to appreciate all of my experiences, for struggle leads to resistance, and resistance enables me to reclaim hope.

Chapter 5: Discussion and Implications

My Learning

I am White. I grew up in a small town on Prince Edward Island. All my school peers were White, my teachers were White and White, middle-class people staffed all the agencies that I dealt with. When I learned of other cultures or races in school, the teachers stressed that all people were the same inside regardless of the color of their skin. That implied to me that all people experienced the world like I did. And the way I experienced the world then was based only on soci-economic factors. Power and privilege came to those who had access to financial wealth.

As a student in a social work program, I participated in a mandatory cross-cultural course taught by Wanda Thomas Bernard. This was the first time I would become aware of the significance of cultural and racial differences. Initially, I resisted the view that racism oppressed people of color regardless of their socio-economic status. Wanda encouraged my questions, commented on my journal entries, and endured my respectful challenges to her definitions of racism and prejudice. Slowly, my mind began to open up to the new view of the world. My journal entries began to reflect that I was becoming aware of racism and how it affects us all. This awareness was created through the examination of my own prejudices and the tendency to stereotype clients of different races and cultures is a continuous process. Wanda encouraged my learning by facilitating open discussions in class that allowed me to explore this new information in a safe, supportive environment.

Wanda's teachings and mentorship had played a central role in my development as a counselling professional. It allowed me to become sensitized to the cultural context of all people, particularly minorities. In my professional work it has meant that I am more aware of the negative effects of racism on my racially marginalized clients and provided me effective tools to practice anti-racist work. Thus, when I became employed in the Northwest Territories shortly after graduating with my Bachelor of Social Work, I consciously practiced anti-racist counselling. I incorporated the information that I had learned from Wanda both as a person and a teacher. I worked with students, teachers, clients as well as other professionals in a manner that attempted to address the racism that existed in their lives and programs. The following are two examples of how the anti-racist approaches, which I learned from Wanda, allowed me to address racism experienced by clients.

Mary's story

Her name was Mary and she was ten years old. When my company entered into a contract with the government of the Northwest Territories to design and implement a group home program for Inuit children, Mary was one of the first children to come into our facility. The first time that I saw Mary, she was in a coat that was, at least, three sizes too big for her. She sat in the foyer of the group home with her head in the neck of the coat. Occasionally she would stick her head out enough that her eyes could scan the room and all that was in it. Her eyes reflected the terror and suspicion of a child who was used to being afraid. And of course she was afraid. She had just left the only home she had ever known and sent to a community she didn't know. She had no idea what

awaited her. The White professional, who accompanied Mary's on the plane to our community, referred to her as "the little savage". The shock at hearing this terminology showed on my face but Mary's only response was to dart her head back into her coat. She probably did not expect any better and her only defense was to hide.

I had been warned to expect violent outbursts from Mary, and they did come. But instead of anger, I saw fear. I vividly remember Mary's small face frozen in a look of apprehension as her eyes continuously darted around the room. Perhaps she felt her vigilance would somehow keep her safe this time.

That evening while Mary was washing up for bedtime, she did not respond to a female staff who was knocking at the bathroom door. All group home residents were told to verbally respond to a knock if they were in the bathroom more than ten minutes and their privacy would be respected. If they did not answer, another knock was administered. If no answer was received, the staff used a key to open the bathroom door to ensure the resident was safe. After the second knock received no reply from Mary that evening, I entered the bathroom. I approached the bathroom door feeling tense. My thoughts were full of how I could ensure Mary was safe but still encourage her to feel that her privacy was being respected for perhaps the first time in her life. Mary had her back to me when I opened the door and she swung around when she saw my reflection in the mirror. Her eyes were the first things that I noticed. There was no defiance or anger in her eyes; just surprise and fear at seeing me enter the bathroom. A loud, strong, voice inside of my head practically shouted, "she did not hear the knocks". Instead of the lecture I expected to give to Mary, I calmly explained to her that I had come in to see if she was safe because she did not answer my knock. She stared mutely though her eyes said it all. I

knew before she finally whispered it that she had not heard my knock. When I told her that I believed her, she seemed so relieved to hear this that I was glad I could honestly state it.

The next day, I took Mary to the nursing station for a physical examination that included a hearing and eye test. We learned that Mary had substantial hearing and visual impairment, a diagnosis that had been missed by the non-Inuit professionals that had frequent contact with Mary. When she received her glasses and hearing aid, her joy at hearing and seeing the world, perhaps for the first time, was obvious. The terror in her eyes faded and was replaced by curiosity. She was eager to join the world that she could now see and hear. Sometimes I would catch her touching her glasses or hearing aid like they were a miracle that she couldn't believe had happened to her.

As I watched the positive transformation that occurred in Mary, I again realized the tremendous benefits of the anti-racist approach advocated by Wanda. This approach had taught me to recognize the terminology "little savage" for what it was, an example of racism. The social worker who used that term had the power to act on her racist opinion in a manner that could negatively affect Mary. When that social worker used the term "little savage, it closed her mind to other possibilities for Mary's behavior. It also had the power to negatively affect other professionals' attitude regarding Mary.

Through Wanda's teaching, I learned the devastating effects of racism on those who experience it and the necessity of viewing all people, particularly my racially marginalized clients, within a cultural context. As a White professional that does not experience racism, Wanda emphasized that I would need to depend on my racially marginalized client to provide the information pertinent to the client's culture and

particulars situation. Thus, in this situation with Mary, I discounted the racist term "little savage" and was open to other possibilities for Mary's behavior. When an alternative possibility was presented, I listened and believed Mary.

Eventually, my family and I left the Northwest Territories to move to Edmonton. There too I implemented the anti-racist practices that had become an essential part of my professional repertoire. As a social worker in Edmonton, Alberta, I worked with aboriginal clients. In many cases, the stories that my clients told me of their experiences with social services were riddled with incidents of racism. I relied heavily on the information I had learned and observed while with Wanda to ensure I did not add to their burden. The following incident illustrates how racism can affect the Aboriginal client's ability to receive treatment and services that are both adequate and appropriate.

Margaret's story

I had been asked to meet with Margaret at her home in an attempt, as her White social worker put it, to "talk some sense into her". According to this social worker, Margaret was argumentative and refused to consider the best interest of her children. The worker was frustrated and annoyed with Margaret. According to the White social worker, Margaret was lucky to find a "decent" aboriginal home that would take her children. When I arrived for our appointment, Margaret invited me in and offered me tea. Margaret told me "that woman" simply didn't like her. She never asked me, but Margaret must have wondered what the worker told me about her.

The cancer that would soon take Margaret's life was winning the battle even then and the pain she felt was evident in her movements and her face. I had reviewed her file and

knew that her children had been apprehended before she had become sick and were placed with aboriginal foster parents. The foster parents now wanted to adopt the children. Margaret's social worker wanted her to voluntarily put the children in permanent care so that they could be adopted sooner rather than later.

As Margaret handed me a cup of tea, I said that I was there to listen. She asked me to sit in a chair close to her because she found talking difficult. Those were the last words she said for about five minutes. We sat in silence. During the silence, I wondered what she was feeling and thinking. I am a mother myself, and I can't imagine the thought of leaving my children forever. When she began to talk, her voice was low and sometimes I gently moved forward so I could hear her. She talked for over an hour even though it was obvious how much effort that took from her. It seemed important to her that she could voice her regret for her treatment of her children and how she would change it if she could. She told me a story that was special to her about each of her children. With her permission I wrote the stories down and, afterwards, I gave them to her children. She talked about the future she dreamed for her children and the sadness she felt at leaving them so soon. She expressed a desire to remain involved with her children. Before our visit ended, she decided that the foster parents should adopt her children. She said she would like to see the children "settled" before she died. She had also created a visitation plan for herself and the children that all involved parties later agreed to. I remember her smile that day when she realized that her plan could actually work. At the end of the visit, Margaret thanked me. I had barely spoken a word throughout the entire visit.

During this incident, I once again relied heavily on the anti-racist practice I learned from Wanda. Because of her teaching I was able to recognize the racism that Margaret

was subjected to in this situation. Again, a White professional has a prejudiced view of Margaret and her situation and had the power to act on these prejudices. I recognized that, because I was White and a social worker, I had a great deal of power and privilege in this situation. It was my responsibility to convince Margaret I wanted to share that power with her. Wanda had emphasized that each culture has its own voice and individuals within a culture use that voice to tell the stories that mattered to them and their culture. In order to share the power I had, I needed to create an environment in which Margaret felt her story would be heard and respected. Wanda also emphasized the need to share power in order to create equality. In order to do this, I needed to involve Margaret in the decisions that affected both her and her children to the fullest extent possible.

In situations such as this one, I struggled with a paternalistic urge to "fix it" for my client by taking control and figuring out the "best" way to solve the client's problem. However, through Wanda I learned the importance of power sharing with clients. As a professional, I had a great deal of power over clients' lives. She emphasized that we need to recognize that power imbalance and relinquish some of that power to our clients in order that the client has the authority to voice both their individual and cultural needs with the expectation that their voice will be heard and respected.

Implications for Counsellors

This study has implications that reach far beyond just my own professional work. It has implications for all counsellors involved with individual or group cross-cultural counselling as well as intercultural counselling. The delivery of effective counselling to racially marginalized clients necessitates that counsellors examine their own personal

feelings and attitudes toward cross-cultural issues. Mann (1990) states that most counsellors are well intentioned in their efforts to provide meaningful services to clients that differ from us by race and/or culture. However, McIntosh (1992) and Wilson (1994) state that many counsellors omit a crucial initial step in the process of gaining awareness and understanding of another's culture. Counsellors often fail to identify and deal with their own biases and prejudices. In order to offer effective services to clients from other cultures, counsellors must be willing to examine these feelings and relegate them to a state where they don't cause us to covertly or overtly harm human beings who are different from ourselves.

Mann (1990) states that working through our personal prejudices and the tendency to stereotype clients of different races and cultures is a continuous process. However, if we are able to develop an introspective awareness, we are certainly better prepared to guide our intervention efforts from a cultural perspective using our client's own strength. Mann (1990) offers the following advice for the counsellor attempting to respond to their clients in ways that affirm and enhance the client's existence. She states that "They can help us to do that if we plan with them instead of for them, if we ask them instead of tell them, and if we learn from them as we teach them" (p. 2)

Although it may be unrealistic to expect that all counsellors will have an in-depth knowledge of all cultural backgrounds, it is feasible for all counsellors to have a comprehensive grasp of general principles for working successfully amid cultural diversity (Corey, 1995). The American Psychological Association (1993), has developed Guidelines for Providers of Psychological Services to Ethnic, Linguistic and Culturally Diverse Population. These rules underscore the responsibility of counsellors to know

their clients' cultural values before delivering mental health services. These guidelines should assist therapists in enhancing their sensitivity and understanding diverse client needs (Koocher & Spiegel, 1998). However, all counsellors must realize that before they can give that sensitivity and understanding to others, they must learn how to look at and analyze their own culture. Wilson (1994) states that "counsellors must understand their own backgrounds, their cultural ties, their traditions and the significance of their experiences" (p.244) in order to fully understand their culturally diverse clientele. There is a strong need for counsellors to understand there are many world views and that their cultural framework is only one among many. However, their own framework provides the lens through which they see (or don't see) and experience (or don't experience) all other cultures.

Limitations

Just as Wanda encourages her students to study their own workplaces and lives for their own opportunities to practice anti-racism, she also believes that it is the unique combination of people and place that may facilitate her own anti-racist work:

> *...this works for me but it may not work for everybody and it may not work for every city. Maybe this works in this location, in this school, at this university...*

This is consistent with the limitations of both ethnographic and narrative research. Much of the popularity of both these research methods in education stems from their holistic, intimate nature. Both research methods offered insight into a highly personalized and specific perspective. Thus, generalizability is almost nonexistent and the results of this research can only be interpreted as a statement of the experiences of one racially marginalized professional. They can not be assumed the norm for all racially

marginalized professionals. This is the story of one African Canadian woman. An Aboriginal woman may have a different story. However, I believe their stories of racism and White privilege would be similar.

Narrative and ethnographic research is also highly dependent on the particular researchers' observations and numerical data are rarely provided. Qualitative research such as narrative and ethnography are more concerned with the credibility of the information than the reliability and validity of numerical data. My own story, as well as the lives of some of Wanda's other students, unite with Wanda's story to provide credibility to not only Wanda's story but our own experiences as well.

In this research, I have brought my own experiences and impressions into the research process, which may be interpreted as researcher bias. However, intertwining my own experiences and impressions within this research has provided an opportunity to retrace the journey I have taken and, in that process, better understand who I have become. This is an essential journey for all counsellors, especially those who work with diverse clientele.

Despite these limitations, or maybe because of them, I believe the tools and insights acquired from Wanda's journey provide powerful lessons for us all, especially counsellors. It also provides an excellent starting point for further research.

Implications for Further Research

It is clear that Wanda's story emphasizes that further investigative study in the area of cross-cultural counselling is required. Possible directions for future research include: Further examinations of other racially marginalized counsellors and professors who teach and/or work with students or clients from different cultures; further examinations of the

students and/or clients of these racially marginalized counsellors and professors to obtain feedback of what tools and information were the most effective in their cross-cultural professional work; an examination of affirmative action programs within Universities and professional counselling bodies to evaluate their effectiveness. Finally, further examination of racially marginalized counsellors' and professors' opinions regarding their experiences within Universities and other professional bodies to evaluate their perceptions and recommendations pertaining to the professional and personal support they receive within these organizations.

Concluding Comments

I feel privileged to have accompanied Wanda on this journey through her life and work. In reflecting upon how this journey has allowed me to examine my own life, I am struck with the powerful issues that emerge; not only for me, but for all involved with individual or group cross cultural counselling. The issues of racism and White privilege were prevalent throughout Wanda's story and reinforced the importance of these issues to the counselling profession. McIntosh (1992) states that "as a White person, I realized I had been taught about racism as something that puts others at a disadvantage, but had been taught not to see one of its corollary aspects, White privilege, which puts me at an advantage" (p. 1). As counsellors, we must become educated to understand the invisible power of Whiteness and recognize its link to racism. Kenyada (2001) states that "I can imagine that the quintessential White privilege is to go through your day without having to think of yourself as being White…first. It must be the ultimate freedom, psychologically speaking" (p.1). Wanda's story also reminds us that racism is an oppressive fact of life for racially marginalized people. Counsellors must be encouraged

to understand the reality of ethnic and racially marginalized clients by the institutions that train them. All counsellors should be taught to understand the cultural barriers (language difficulties, class bound values and culture bound values) that hinder the formation of a good counselling relationship (Atkinson et. al, 1993). Because of Wanda's stories and reflections on the experiences of being racially marginalized, I have come to realize that no matter how much I try to understand or be sensitized to these experiences, as a White person, I am too far away from these experiences to ever fully understand them. As a woman who grew up poor, I can understand oppression. However, I cannot fully understand racial oppression. Even as a poor White woman, the society I lived in told me that I was "normal" in many important ways. All around me the lawmakers and enforcers were White. They shared my cultural viewpoint of what was wrong and right. The educational institutions I attended always had primarily White instructors, many of them White women. The courses offered were taught from my cultural perspective and in my language. The tests I was given measured my ability to communicate and learn in a White culture.

As I came to the realization that I could not ever fully understand racial oppression, I also realized that I would forever be a "student" attempting to more fully understand the racially marginalized experience. I realized that I need my racially marginalized friends, colleagues and clients to help me understand their experiences through their words and their actions. I need to always be open to the fact that I needed them to become my "teachers" because without their assistance, the distance between our experiences is too wide for me to cross. I also need to be aware that this distance exists or I risk underestimating the devastating effects of racism.

Through these themes of racism and White privilege emerged the urgent need for positive change within the counselling profession. Counsellors must be taught to recognize that racism and White privilege isolates racially marginalized people. In order for minorities to be included, changes to the status quo are required. Although the American Psychological Association (1993) has developed Guidelines for Providers of Psychological Service to Ethnic, Linguistic and Culturally Diverse Populations, this alone is not enough. In order for these guidelines to have any positive effect, it is essential that the institutions that train counsellors make cross cultural as well as intercultural education a mandatory requirement of counselling education. For this type of education to occur, racially marginalized faculty must be hired and, just as importantly, professionally supported within educational institutions. These supports should include an acknowledgement of the fact that many racially marginalized faculty may feel isolated; not only within the institution itself, but also within the community in which the institutions are housed.

When I wrote this thesis, I wanted Wanda's voice to flow uninterrupted, as it was her story and her experiences being expressed. However, by interweaving the research literature, as well as my own reflections with her story, the research took on a personal element. It was not longer about just the faceless "others". The research and Wanda's voice combined to become a personal story of struggle and triumph against tremendous societal and institutional barriers. This story also provides an important message to all counsellors. A counsellor who chooses to ignore different stories or other voices in order to pacify the status quo, however good his or her intentions, contributes to social

problems like racism by allowing them to exist unquestioned and unchallenged. Toughill (as quoted in Scott, 2001) speaks of "racism by indifference" (p. 88). She maintains that indifference is a necessity for racism to flourish. Wanda echoes this sentiment in her teaching and her work. She believes that all people, especially professionals, must actively engage in anti-racist work to create change: To sit idle, is to endorse the status quo.

We shall have to repent in our time

Not merely for the vitriolic words of the bad men

But also, for the appalling silence of the good ones.

Dr. Martin Luther King

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